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CR Consumer Reports®

NOVEMBER + DECEMBER 2023

855 PRODUCTS RATED & REVIEWED

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

Top Picks OF THE YEAR

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855 products rated & reviewed

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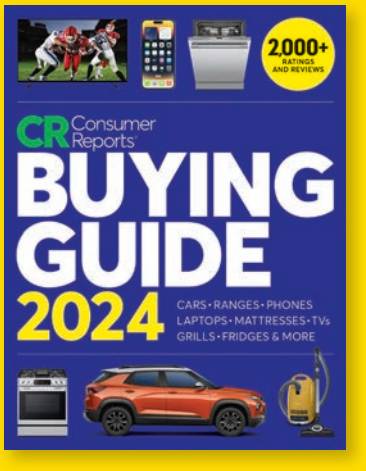

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Protecting Your Privacy Online

THE INTERNET has made holiday shopping more convenient for many of us. Last year, over 87 million Americans went online to shop on Black Friday.

But that convenience comes at a steep price—the incessant chipping away at both our online security and our personal privacy. Nearly every time we buy something online (or merely do some browsing!), companies are tracking our shopping habits and collecting our personal information. What they learn about us often gets shared and sold to third parties, who target us with yet more marketing offers.

And while a flood of, say, lawn chair ads can be annoying, our personal info may also be shared in inappropriate ways that expose us to online scams, or unfairly influence whether we get a loan or a job.

Losing control over our personal data should not be the price of convenience. A handful of states have, with CR's support, passed digital privacy legislation that's shifting power back to consumers. But no such law exists at the national level. And even when we do have the right to stop the sharing and selling of our information, exercising those rights can be extremely difficult.

To help address this problem, CR has launched Permission Slip, a free mobile app that reveals the kinds of information about you that companies collect, trade, and sell. Then, with a simple tap, you can tell those companies to stop selling your data.

Your support makes innovation possible at CR. Thanks to all of you who helped us create Permission Slip. Let us know what you think, so we can keep improving it—and strengthening privacy protections across the U.S.

Learn more at **permissionslipcr.com**, and download the free app at Apple's App Store or the Google Play store.

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PHOTO: VICTORIA WILL

Safeguarding Tax Returns

In July, a Congressional report brought to light a vast breach of personal privacy: Three popular online tax preparation companies—H&R Block, TaxAct, and TaxSlayer—had for years been sharing information pulled from tens of millions of consumer tax returns with tech giants Meta (Facebook), Google, and others.

The information shared included taxpayer incomes, refund amounts, and names of dependent children, plus scrambled versions of names, email addresses, phone numbers, and gender, which experts say could be easily unscrambled.

The report concluded that both the tax prep companies and the Big Tech firms that received the information likely violated taxpayer rights and may have violated privacy laws.

CR has long fought for strong privacy laws that would stop companies from gathering and distributing information beyond what's essential for fulfilling consumer requests. So when this report became public, CR quickly launched a petition urging the Federal Trade Commission, Internal Revenue Service, and Department of Justice to investigate the tax prep firms further—and prosecute them if they violated the law. In just 72 hours, more than 27,000 consumers signed on.

CR has also launched a project to learn whether additional companies may be sharing your data with Facebook—and you can help by downloading that info from Facebook and sharing it with us. Go to **CR.org/FBdatavolunteer** to learn more, and sign up to receive step-by-step instructions for how you can participate.

20 million

Minimum estimated number of taxpayers whose data was shared by tax prep firms with Google and Facebook.

SOURCE: JULY 2023 SENATE REPORT "ATTACKS ON TAX PRIVACY"

ACTION UPDATE

CR spent years supporting passage of the STURDY Act, a law requiring new dressers and similar furniture to meet safety standards that will help prevent tip-overs—and the injuries and deaths they cause. But some companies are still selling potentially dangerous goods made before the law took effect in September. CR and other advocates are working together to prevent these items from being sold to consumers, as well as urging the Consumer Product Safety Commission to strictly enforce the law. You can learn to prevent tip-overs in your own home at **CR.org/anchortips.**

Shrinking the Digital Divide

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The Federal Communications Commission has long maintained a national broadband map meant to show which companies offer broadband connections at every location in the country, and at what speed.

But the map has historically overstated the reach of broadband service. And the FCC acknowledges that it lacks the detail policymakers need to narrow the "digital divide" between people who have access to high-speed internet and those in underserved communities who don't.

WHAT CR IS DOING ABOUT IT

For years, CR has pressed the FCC to improve the map, but the problem is especially urgent now because some $42 billion in infrastructure funds are being spent to expand broadband coverage. That money should be targeted with care.

The good news? The FCC gave the map a major update last year.

Now CR has joined with the nonprofit news organization The Markup to make sure that the new map is accurate, reflecting which broadband providers serve specific neighborhoods, and what speeds they are actually offering.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We're asking consumers to check the map for information on their own homes on the FCC's interactive website and report the results to CR. You can volunteer at **CR.org/fccmaptest,** and we'll send you simple instructions on what to look for and how to report what you find.

The effort might even save you money: While checking the FCC map, you may learn your area is served by an additional provider that offers a better broadband deal than your current provider.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN RITTER

PRODUCT UPDATE
The Top Laundry Detergents
THE LIQUIDS ARE BETTER
BEST (AND WORST) LAUNDRY DETERGENTS
THE MOST RELIABLE USED CARS
EASY NEW WAYS TO SELL YOUR STUFF
CR Consumer Reports
Live Healthier Longer
The anti-aging foods, supplements, and immunity boosters that really work.

Our September 2023 article **"The Top Laundry Detergents"** featured our ratings of liquids, pods, and sheets, and offered advice on eco-friendly options and the best ways to remove stains. Our readers shared their thoughts. To add yours, head to **CR.org/topdetergents**.

YOUR ARTICLE ON detergents evaluated stain removal and performance in hard water but didn't indicate how they performed washing clothes in cold water, which one must often do with those made from certain fabrics. Did you test for that, and if so with what result?
–Ernest B. Hook, San Rafael, CA

EDITOR'S NOTE *We test laundry detergents using cool water. So you can trust that our top picks will work well no matter what temperature of water you use during the cycle.*

WRITE

Go to CR.org/lettertoeditor to share your comments for publication.

WHY DIDN'T YOU mention powdered detergents in the September Product Update? We buy Tide powder in a cardboard box. It works great in our high-efficiency (HE) washer, and it keeps us from constantly tossing away big plastic liquid detergent jugs.
–Jens Swenson, via email

EDITOR'S NOTE *To make sure we can continue to provide the most valuable information to our members, CR focuses on testing products that most consumers use. Our market analysts have found that powdered detergents are purchased by a very small number of consumers, so we no longer include powdered formulas in our tests. That said, powdered detergent can certainly be a smart choice if you prefer not to use products sold in plastic packaging.*

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT using detergent pods instead of liquid laundry detergent: The primary reason I switched to detergent pods as I got older is the weight of those huge liquid detergent bottles. I have had no problem using a spray-on stain treatment prior to washing when necessary, and a single detergent pod gets my dirtiest and largest loads clean. I tried the detergent sheets, but I agree [with CR] that their cleaning power doesn't cut it.
–Susan Thomas, Gardnerville, NV

TESTING FOR HEART HEALTH

IN "HOW TO Stay Healthy Longer," you omitted [the importance of checking your levels of] lipoprotein(a), which are high in an estimated 20 percent of Americans.
–Marsha Epstein, Los Angeles

EDITOR'S NOTE *A high level of lipoprotein(a) is a recognized and largely genetic risk factor for heart disease. If you have a family history of early cardiovascular disease, your doctor may order a test to check your Lp(a) levels. In Canada and some other countries, official guidelines suggest that everyone should have this test at least once. In the U.S., the American Heart Association says that some issues with diagnosis should be resolved before wider screening is recommended. But you can still ask your doctor about checking your Lp(a) levels with a simple blood test.*

ADVICE ON INSURANCE

IN RESPONSE TO "Get the Insurance You Need (at a Great Price)": My wife and I over many years have found that having a good independent agent is a big asset. He has often guided us to lesser-known or less-advertised companies that give us far better rates and coverage than the big-name companies that have high advertising and overhead costs.
–Jack Dill, Blanchard, OK

EDITOR'S NOTE *An independent insurance agent can be very helpful when you're shopping for insurance coverage. And CR's ratings bear out your*

experience: Some of the biggest and best-known providers got the lowest user-satisfaction scores in our surveys.

THANK YOU FOR pointing out that long-term-care insurance (LTC) is coverage we might not need. Our mother was diagnosed with cancer in October. We then spent five months dealing with administrative headaches and astounding amounts of paperwork [before her LTC finally started]. The insurance, into which our mother had paid premiums for 15 years, paid out a total of $1,200. Two weeks later, our mother passed away. She would have been much better off investing all those premiums and then using her money the way she wanted to, when she most needed it.
–Cindy Alfieri, Ripon, CA

BEST PRINTER OPTIONS

IN "SAVING MONEY on Printers," you highlight laser printers as a money-saving alternative to inkjet models, but you give only a cursory mention to even more thrifty tank printers. My husband and I have had a Canon Pixma G3260 printer for a couple of years, and we love it. We haven't yet had to refill any of the ink tanks. When they do need refilling, the cost for the three colors on the Canon website is [around] $12.99 apiece, $17.99 for black. The only maintenance required is that you print a page in color at least once a week to prevent ink clogs.
–Amelia Hard, Portland, OR

EDITOR'S NOTE *Tank printers do indeed offer significant savings on ink costs, and it's great to hear that you're happy with yours. (In our tests, that model got high marks for its thrifty ink costs and sharp text and graphics, but it printed slowly.) But in our CR member surveys, tank printers score much lower than black-and-white laser printers for predicted reliability. Canon's cartridge-based models, for example, have middling reliability and low satisfaction scores. By contrast, Canon's all-in-one black-and-white laser printers are above par for both reliability and satisfaction, and Brother's regular and all-in-one black-and-white laser printers get the highest scores.*

WHAT'S THE TOP STAIN REMOVER FOR LAUNDRY?

Regarding "How to Remove Tough Stains," I've found that one of the easiest ways is by rubbing a drop or two of dishwashing soap onto the spot prior to washing. It removes most stains (even after they've gone through the dryer).
—Leslie Picker, Haure de Grace, MD

EDITOR'S NOTE *Our laundry experts say it's fine to use dish soap sparingly as a spot treatment. But don't use it instead of your regular laundry detergent. The sudsy formula can build up inside the drum, leading to mold and mildew and leaving clothes feeling soapy.*

AUTO SEAT PROBLEMS

IN YOUR ROAD TEST report for the Honda Accord Hybrid, you mention that the car's front seats lose support on long drives. You should also point out that the passenger seat height cannot be adjusted. For shorter passengers (such as my 5'2" wife), this is a major inconvenience as visibility is limited. That was a deal breaker for us, so we passed on the Accord.
–J. David Culbertson, Houston

EDITOR'S NOTE *Adjustable height for the passenger seat is more common in luxury cars. Most mainstream models have that function only for the driver's seat, where visibility is a safety concern. But it's important to try a car's seat in person before you buy–particularly for the trim level you're considering. (Each trim typically has different seat features and adjustment options.) The people who test our cars come in all sizes, so we can assess comfort from many perspectives. But no one can predict what you and your family will find comfortable. And yes, the Accord has a notably low seat.*

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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ILLUSTRATION BY JASON SCHNEIDER

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Chromebooks

WE TESTED: 52 models
WE TEST FOR: The quality of a Chromebook's display, as well as its overall performance, ergonomics, battery life, storage, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 66
Range: 51-88

THIN & LIGHT 14-INCH DISPLAY
Chromebook Vero 514 CBV514-1H-55VP
$600

84 OVERALL SCORE

LARGE 16-INCH DISPLAY
Lenovo IdeaPad 5i Gaming Chromebook 16
$460

80 OVERALL SCORE

14-INCH TOUCHSCREEN WITH LONG BATTERY LIFE
Lenovo Slim 3 Chromebook 14
$320

76 OVERALL SCORE

HVAC Air Filters

WE TESTED: 58 models
WE TEST FOR: How well a filter cleared the air of dust, pollen, and smoke; how freely air passed through the unit; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 31
Range: 11-75

BEST 4-INCH-THICK FILTER
Aprilaire Healthy Home 213 MERV 13
$41

75 OVERALL SCORE

BEST 5-INCH-THICK FILTER
Lennox Healthy Climate CarbonClean 16
$100

70 OVERALL SCORE

BEST 1-INCH-THICK FILTER
Filtrete MPR 1900 Filter
$23

68 OVERALL SCORE

Ask Our Experts

How often do I need to change my HVAC air filter?

Most filters last between three and 12 months. Life span varies by model, but in general, the thicker the disposable filter, the less often it needs changing. But the filter thickness you use is dictated by the type of heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system you have. The 5-inch-thick Lennox (above) lasts about 12 months; the 1-inch Filtrete (also above) needs replacing every three months or so. You can also find washable filters, which last longer (some are claimed to last several years), but they need to be cleaned every month—and none of the ones we've tested earned a CR recommendation. Before you replace a disposable filter, check its condition. If it looks clean, it can be used a bit longer. But if it's visibly dirty, it's time to replace it.

ILLUSTRATION: JOSEPH CARRINGTON

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to **CR.org**.

Food Vacuum Sealers

WE TESTED: 7 models
WE TEST FOR: How quickly and well a model seals chicken breasts (with marinade and without) in a bag, how easy the sealer is to use, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 81
Range: 76-87

EASY TO USE
FoodSaver VS3180 Multi-Use
$180

87 OVERALL SCORE

SPEEDY & EFFECTIVE SEALING
Hamilton Beach NutriFresh 78220
$125

83 OVERALL SCORE

QUIET & A NICE PRICE
Geryon E2900-MS
$76

80 OVERALL SCORE

Space Heaters Under $55

WE TESTED: 36 models
WE TEST FOR: How well a model heats a standard-sized room and keeps a nearby person warm, its fire-preventive attributes, its ease of use, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 54
Range: 20-78

HEATS A ROOM WELL
Honeywell HCE311V
$54

71 OVERALL SCORE

GOOD AT SPOT HEATING
Comfort Zone CZ45E
$25

65 OVERALL SCORE

HAS MULTIPLE FAN SPEEDS
Mainstays (Walmart) WSH10C2AWW
$23

61 OVERALL SCORE

Snow Removal Tools

WE TESTED: 70 snow blowers and 7 power shovels
WE TEST FOR: How quickly a model removes snow, how easy it is to handle, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
BLOWERS
Median: 70; range: 29-92
SHOVELS
Median: 77; range: 46-92

POWER SHOVEL FOR SMALLER JOBS
Greenworks 2600602
$350

92 OVERALL SCORE

BATTERY BLOWER FOR MEDIUM SNOW (UP TO 12 INCHES)
Ego SNT2405
(two-stage)
$1,600

79 OVERALL SCORE

GAS BLOWER FOR HEAVY SNOW (UP TO 18 INCHES)
Troy-Bilt Vortex 2610
(three-stage)
$1,600

84 OVERALL SCORE

Inverter Generators

WE TESTED: 30 models
WE TEST FOR: Power delivery and quality, noise levels, ease of use, and hours of run time. We also test for responsiveness of CO-sensing safety tech.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 73
Range: 38-85

PORTABLE DESIGN (1,700 WATTS)
DeWalt DXGNI2200
$700

75 OVERALL SCORE

MEDIUM POWER (3,650 WATTS) WITH LONG RUN TIME
Champion 201049
$650

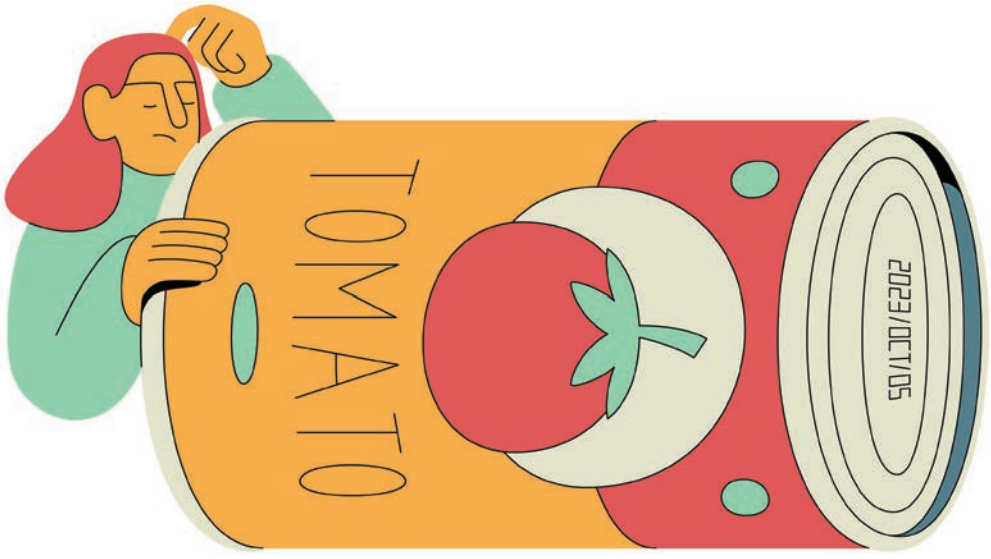
85 OVERALL SCORE

VERY POWERFUL (7,000 WATTS)
Wen GN875iX
$940

72 OVERALL SCORE

Note: *We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another.*

COMING NEXT MONTH Treadmills & More



Is it okay to eat canned foods after their 'use by' date?

CANNED FOODS (as well as other nonperishables, like packages of dried grains) are usually fine to eat even when past the date you see on the label. That's because the "best if used by," "sell by," and "use by" designations on cans are a manufacturer's best guess for how long the canned food will look and taste fresh, rather than how safe it will be to eat after that date. (The one exception to that is the use-by date on infant formula.) In any event, you aren't likely to notice a difference in quality if you open a can whose use-by date has only recently passed.

Most canned foods (tuna, soups, and vegetables) can be stored for two to five years after purchase. A few types (acidic foods such as tomatoes, pickles, and canned juices) may need to be used more quickly–within a year to 18 months, according to the Department of Agriculture. How can you tell if what's inside a can is okay to eat? First, when you open it, trust your nose: Foul odors are a sign to toss it. Also throw a can out if it has any deep dents, bulges, or rust. All can signal potentially dangerous bacteria–like C. botulinum–inside.

Finally, the USDA offers a free app called FoodKeeper, which will help you determine how soon food should be consumed if it's stored in the pantry, or how long it will last in your fridge once opened. It's four days in the fridge for most open canned goods.

LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at CR.org/askourexperts ... and watch for the answers.

How can I find discount codes online that work?

IT HAPPENS with many online purchases: You get to the checkout page, see the empty box that says "enter promo code" and immediately wish you had one. But finding a working discount code is a pain without the right tools.

Rather than searching on your own for coupon codes, our shopping experts recommend downloading a coupon-finding browser extension. CR shopping editor Samantha Gordon likes to use Honey, a free tool that you can download on any browser (like Chrome or Safari). Once installed, it will automatically seek out discount codes and apply them when you're purchasing a product online. "It's a huge time-saver," she says.

Similarly, Capital One offers a free downloadable coupon finder at capitaloneshopping.com (you don't need to be a Capital One customer to use it), and Rakuten is a free downloadable tool that finds coupons, as well as cash-back deals. Or you can shop using a browser such as Microsoft Edge, which already has an automatic coupon checker and cash-back deal alerts built in.

It's also worth checking your credit card issuer's website for deals, our experts say. Many offer discount codes, money back, or extra credit card points on your purchase when you shop at specific vendors.

Is a broken phone screen worth getting repaired, or should I get a new phone?

FOR THOSE with phone insurance or an extended warranty plan, yes, it's worth getting the screen repaired. With AppleCare+, for instance, you can replace the screen on any model dating back to the iPhone 6 for $29. With Samsung Care+, it's $29 too. For those without coverage, the decision isn't as simple because repair prices vary by model. For example, Apple's estimate to replace the 4.7-inch screen on the iPhone SE is $129, but for the same-sized screen on the iPhone 8, it's $149. And the 6.7-inch screen on the iPhone 14 Pro Max costs $379. You can find repair estimates for specific models on manufacturer sites, or sites such as Swappa, which offers a phone repair calculator.

Once you know the repair cost, compare it with the current worth of your phone model. A used iPhone 5s, for example, sells for about $20 to $75 on sites like eBay and Walmart, and it has no trade-in value at the major wireless carriers. So unless you really love your old 5s, screen repair isn't worth shelling out for. The same goes for a phone that's too old to get security updates (which protect you from cyberthreats). Android phone makers, for example, offer four to five years of security updates from the time the devices are released–so if you got yours five years ago, it's smarter to buy a new phone.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSEPH CARRINGTON

CR Insights

PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL ADVICE

IN THE KNOW

Great Gifts for $35 or Less

Check out these budget-friendly finds from CR staffers.

PHOTO: SCOTT MEADOWS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Stick With Me 6 pc Bonbon Box $28

Open up this "book" and you'll find six glossy chocolates almost too pretty to eat, but we did anyway. They come in a mix of 24 possible flavors, and our tasters loved them all—especially the wild strawberry and pecan praline.

Brooklyn Candle Studio Sweet Fig Minimalist $28

This 100 percent soy wax candle offers a sweetly calming fragrance that mixes fig with rosewood and patchouli. And it comes in an elegant glass jar with a brushed gold lid.

Warrior 64118 Cordless Drill $30

This 18-volt model—good for general use—is easy to handle and quiet, and has a built-in LED light for when you're working in low light. It also has a longer-than-average battery run time compared with other models we've tested.

JBL Tune 510BT Headphones $30

In our tests, these Bluetooth wireless on-ear headphones delivered very good sound. We like that this set has a quick-charge feature: Just 5 minutes of charging will provide 2 hours of playtime.

Turn the page for more budget-friendly gift ideas.

Great Gifts for $35 or Less

Continued

Emily Thomas
auto safety manager

I OWN THIS!

Imusa Cast Aluminum Caldero With Lid (11.6-quart) $27

"This caldero [similar to a Dutch oven] is just like the one my mom used when I was growing up. I cook cornbread stuffing with it, as well as curries and stews. Since this pot is wide and not too deep, it's also easy to stir foods as they simmer."

Fishwife The Classic Smoky Trio $33

This colorful set of tins contains a delicious and rich-tasting sampling of smoked fish. The trio includes rainbow trout from Idaho, albacore tuna from the Pacific coast, and Atlantic salmon from Norway.

71
OVERALL SCORE

Bissell Pet Hair Eraser 33A1 Vacuum $35

In our tests, this corded Bissell handheld vacuum was exceptional at removing debris from both bare floors and carpets. We like its strong suction, and that it comes with a dedicated pet-hair cleaning attachment.

Mzoo Sleep Mask $17

Give the gift of a more satisfying catnap with this well-designed eye mask that's great at blocking light for all face shapes and sizes. CR's team of evaluators agreed that this mask was effective and comfortable.

Serman Brands 1.0 RFID Blocking Wallet $30

What makes this wallet a special gift? In addition to the soft leather that feels like suede, it can hold six to eight credit cards, has an internal money clip for bills, and includes RFID (radio frequency identification) security to keep your cards safe from data theft.

92
OVERALL SCORE

ThermoPro Digital Meat 24 Thermometer (TP19H) $17

This folding digital thermometer is easy to read and accurate, helping home chefs cook meat and poultry perfectly. It's also fast, able to give you a reading within seconds.

PHOTOS: CONSUMER REPORTS (3); MANUFACTURERS

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED

72
OVERALL SCORE

3Plus HR+ Fitness Tracker $30

The 3Plus offers a 1-inch color LCD display, a heart rate monitor, step counting, and sleep and calorie tracking—plus a claimed battery life of seven days. Its wireless magnetic charging capability also makes it easy to charge.

Garrett Popcorn Classic Tin of CaramelCrisp $35

We tried six gourmet popcorn brands, and Garrett Popcorn won best caramel-flavored popcorn honors. The kernels are extra-large, fluffy, and slightly crunchy with a soft finish. And they're perfectly coated in buttery, bittersweet, and salty caramel.

Mouth Cheese Trio $33

Mouth, our top-scoring company for food gift baskets, offers some truly memorable baskets for nice prices. This cheese set includes blue cheese, aged Gouda, and a tea-infused cow's milk cheese.

Forest Origins Pink Oyster Mushroom Grow Kit $26

A fungi-growing kit is an unusual and cool gift for mushroom lovers. Our evaluators found this one easy to set up, with a low-maintenance growing process. Its first batch of pink and cream mushrooms started growing in just four days.

Gaiam Foldable Yoga Mat $25

Yoga mats can be great gifts even for those who don't practice. Use this mat anytime you want to do some stretches or to protect your knees when kneeling down. We particularly like that it doesn't roll up but folds into a rectangle, making it easy to transport.

Crocs Classic Lined Clogs (unisex) $33 & up

These clog-slippers are made with a type of plastic that softens and molds to your feet over time and, as a bonus, are lined with comfy faux fur. Our staffers say the thick, textured soles offer good traction and provide insulation from frigid floors in winter.

78
OVERALL SCORE

Primula Burke Cold Brew Coffee Maker $24

Sitting at the top of our cold-brew coffee maker ratings, this Primula model is also the least expensive one we've tested. It's super-easy to use, and all its parts are top-rack dishwasher-safe. The glass carafe holds about six cups of coffee.

Anna Kocharian
shopping editor

I OWN THIS!

'Make It Ahead: A Barefoot Contessa Cookbook' (Clarkson Potter, 2014) hardcover, $18.29

"This cookbook has been a saving grace for me. One year I missed 45 minutes of my own Thanksgiving dinner because I was attempting to make gravy from scratch. Now I have a handful of dishes that I can make the night before (even two days before the main meal), and it takes so much stress out of prepping on the day of."

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Steam Mops

THESE MOPS clean your floors without the mess and hassle of using an ordinary squeeze mop. You press a button to heat water from a refillable tank to create steam and move the mop pad over your floor. The steam evaporates quickly, leaving you with streak-free, dry floors. Steam mops cost more than a typical mop and bucket–from $60 to $350–and some do a much better job than others.

The models shown here were tops in tests where they had to clean up ceramic floors covered in dried ketchup, mustard, and jam. We especially liked the models with special features, such as a detachable handheld cleaner on the mop's base–offered on the Bissell and PurSteam models at right.

Tineco Floor One S5 $350 *(at right)*

- 5/5 CLEANING
- 5/5 STEAM RATE
- 4/5 CONVENIENCE
- 27 CORD LENGTH (FT.)

90 OVERALL SCORE

Bissell PowerFresh 2-in-1 2814 $65

- 5/5 CLEANING
- 3/5 STEAM RATE
- 2/5 CONVENIENCE
- 16 CORD LENGTH (FT.)

83 OVERALL SCORE

PurSteam 10-1 Therma Pro 211 $70

- 5/5 CLEANING
- 4/5 STEAM RATE
- 3/5 CONVENIENCE
- 16 CORD LENGTH (FT.)

82 OVERALL SCORE

Bissell PowerFresh Slim 2075A $150

- 5/5 CLEANING
- 4/5 STEAM RATE
- 3/5 CONVENIENCE
- 25 CORD LENGTH (FT.)

79 OVERALL SCORE

Bissell PowerFresh Pet Lift-Off 15441 $150

- 4/5 CLEANING
- 4/5 STEAM RATE
- 5/5 CONVENIENCE
- 25 CORD LENGTH (FT.)

78 OVERALL SCORE

Shark Steam & Scrub S7001 $160

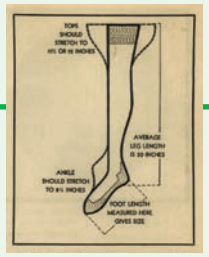
- 4/5 CLEANING
- 4/5 STEAM RATE
- 4/5 CONVENIENCE
- 22 CORD LENGTH (FT.)

78 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTOS, LEFT: CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURER (PURSTEAM); BOTTOM: CONSUMER REPORTS

CR Time Traveler TOP PICKS

1936 In our first ever issue, we test women's stockings for durability and comfort. Siren stockings are top-rated and a great deal at just 25 cents a stocking.



1947 This Sunbeam Mixmaster is tops in our tests of six electric food mixers. It excels at blending batter and juicing, and is easy to clean.

1958 A top product of the year, this RCA vacuum impresses CR with its superior cleaning and a special new feature: an electric rotating brush in the nozzle.

1965 Our testers rave about new and convenient "boil-in-the-bag" vegetables. There's "no sauce to make, no saucepan to wash," we say, and give high ratings to Flav-R-Pac and Seabrook Farms.

1974 We love the Arrow Getaway oxford shirt, $8 to $12, which passes our durability test and can be machine-washed without wrinkling.

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED

FOOD IQ™

Which Brand of Turkey Tastes Best?

THIS CENTERPIECE of holiday meals requires a lot of attention: A 16-pound frozen turkey needs about 4 hours of cook time (after days of thawing in the fridge). While most turkey tastes fine if you use enough butter and seasonings, it helps to start off with a great-tasting bird. That's why CR's staffers roasted five popular grocery store birds (bought frozen), and then did a blind taste test. Our prep was basic: 2.5 teaspoons of kosher salt on the skin and in the cavity. After roasting the turkeys in disposable aluminum pans, we sampled both white and dark meat, checking texture, flavor, and moistness. At right, see which birds we liked the most, and those that weren't crowd-pleasers.

PHOTOS, RIGHT: STEPHEN YANG; CONSUMER REPORTS

TOP TURKEY

365 by Whole Foods Market Organic

PRICE PAID $2.99 per pound

This organic bird took the top spot for most evaluators. Some tasters thought the meat was a little bland, but others really enjoyed it, saying both the white and dark meat were moist.

GOOD-LOOKING BUT PRICEY

Willie Bird

PRICE PAID $11.22 per pound

No evaluator picked this as their favorite bird, but it did have some fans. "This one was savory, pleasantly gamey, and flavorful," one staffer said. Several evaluators also thought this one looked really good on the plate.

LOW COST BUT DRY

Member's Mark (Sam's Club)

PRICE PAID $1.19 per pound

While the price we paid was budget-friendly, reviews were mixed when it came to the flavor of this bird. Only one evaluator enjoyed it, and several others thought it was bland and/or too dry. If you choose this turkey, our testers advise not to overcook it.

Note: Prices are what CR staffers paid in November 2022. At press time, 2023 prices were not yet available.

1983 New portable tape players are becoming popular. Of the 22 we test, this Aiwa has lots of features and great sound quality.

1997 In CR's annual auto issue, we report that the Mercedes-Benz E320 is "the best of the best" for its responsive handling, strong acceleration, fuel economy, and plush ride.

2010 In our first tests of Apple iPads, we say they're sleek and versatile, with a display that provides "vivid color." And they're "a pleasure to use."

2013 Earning first place in our tests, this $600 Weber Spirit SP-320 grill preheats quickly and evenly at high and low temps.

2023 This LG TV earns the No. 1 spot in our ratings of 65-inch TVs for its excellent picture quality and predicted reliability.

LG OLED65G3PUA TV

$3,300

87

OVERALL SCORE

To discover the very best products we've tested in 2023, turn to our "Top Picks" article, on page 28.

CR MONEY SAVER

Pay Less for Your New Mattress

WHEN SHOPPING for a mattress, most people don't negotiate the sticker price they see in stores or online. But speaking up pays off: Our latest survey of CR members found that 63 percent of mattress shoppers who said they negotiated to get a lower price were successful, saving a median of $258.

"Haggling works," says Martin Lachter, who oversees CR mattress surveys. "Even a customer who does nothing other than ask for a break on the price will, more often than not, be successful." In fact, our survey of 6,139 CR members showed that 61 percent of those who asked a seller (online or in store) for a lower price got one. But that's not the only way to score a deal. Here, other smart tactics our members have used.

1 Check the mattress manufacturer's website.
If you're shopping at a mattress retail store, always check the mattress manufacturer's website price to see whether it's lower there. If it is, ask the seller to match it. Two-thirds (67 percent) of customers in our survey who used this tactic were successful.

2 Research past prices.
It takes a little effort, but you can also track a seller's prices over time using a browser extension tool such as CamelCamelCamel on your computer, says Kelly Moomey, CR's senior market analyst for mattresses. (Turn to page 10 to learn more about the benefits of using browser extension tools while shopping.) If you see that a seller previously dropped the price of a specific mattress you're interested in, it might be willing to match that lower price again if you ask about it (either in person or through a retailer's online chatbot).

3 Mention a competing retailer.
When hagglers said they specifically brought up the prices at a competing mattress dealer to the seller, more than two-thirds (69 percent) scored a deal.

4 Be willing to walk away.
The "I'll walk away" tactic may sound like a cliché, but it works. When CR members told the seller they'd check out other mattress retailers, 63 percent of shoppers were offered a lower price.

5 Haggle for extras.
If a retailer won't offer you a discount on the mattress alone, it's worth asking whether you can get a bundled discount–like the mattress plus a box spring. Some companies have a "buy more, save more" approach that makes customers eligible for discounts if they spend enough. It's also worth asking whether a seller is willing to include additional services at no charge, like hauling away your old mattress and/or free delivery and setup.

Mattress Retailers With the Best Prices

COSTCO WHOLESALE
72 OVERALL SATISFACTION
5/5 PRICE SATISFACTION

amazon [1]
71 OVERALL SATISFACTION
5/5 PRICE SATISFACTION

IKEA
57 OVERALL SATISFACTION
5/5 PRICE SATISFACTION

Original MATTRESS FACTORY [2]
94 OVERALL SATISFACTION
4/5 PRICE SATISFACTION

[1] Ratings based heavily on online mattress purchases.

[2] Ratings based heavily on in-store mattress purchases.

Ratings are based on the Consumer Reports 2023 Winter Survey of 6,139 CR members reporting on their mattress purchases made in 2022 and the first quarter of 2023.

PHOTO: DEMAERRE/GETTY IMAGES

WORSE BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY | CR GREEN CHOICE

CARS WITH THE BEST MPG

CAN YOU TRUST the miles per gallon number listed on a new car's window sticker? According to CR's tests, not always.

That window sticker displays Environmental Protection Agency fuel-economy ratings, which are derived from tests done in labs–not from driving on roads. CR has found that these estimates can be optimistic. For our fuel-economy tests, we precisely measure fuel consumption while driving on CR's track as well as on public highways to get real city, highway, and overall mileage.

Not surprisingly, hybrids do best in our tests. (In fact, the Nissan Kicks is the only nonhybrid that makes this list.) That's because hybrid powertrains cleverly combine a small gas engine augmented by an electric motor and a battery pack to optimize fuel economy. Hybrids are also able to recapture energy during braking that would otherwise be lost.

Here, we list the most fuel-efficient autos in popular categories. All are CR Recommended–a distinction that considers ratings for our road test, reliability, owner satisfaction, and safety. And almost all carry our Green Choice designation–for autos that produce fewer greenhouse gases and smog-forming emissions than 80 percent of vehicles.

COMPACT HATCHBACK
Toyota Prius AWD
80 OVERALL SCORE

COMPACT SEDAN
Hyundai Elantra Hybrid
73 OVERALL SCORE

MPG
51
48
47
42
38
37
36
35
34
32

MIDSIZED SEDAN
Toyota Camry Hybrid
90 OVERALL SCORE

LUXURY SEDAN
Lexus ES 300h
86 OVERALL SCORE

LUXURY SMALL SUV
Lexus NX 350h
87 OVERALL SCORE

LUXURY MIDSIZED SUV
Lexus RX 350h
86 OVERALL SCORE

MINIVAN
Toyota Sienna
81 OVERALL SCORE

PICKUP TRUCK
Ford Maverick Hybrid
80 OVERALL SCORE

SMALL SUV
RAV4 Hybrid
78 OVERALL SCORE

MIDSIZED SUV
Toyota Venza
80 OVERALL SCORE

SUBCOMPACT HATCHBACK
Nissan Kicks
61 OVERALL SCORE

MIDSIZED 3-ROW SUV
Toyota Highlander Hybrid
86 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTO (LEXUS NX 350H): JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

EASY DIY

The One Tool Everybody Should Have

AN OSCILLATING MULTI-TOOL can help you with a wide array of small home-improvement jobs. Want to remove grout, scrape paint or wallpaper, make precise cuts in drywall to install a wall outlet, cut through metal or plastic piping, cut off exposed nails or screws that are too difficult to pull out, and cut or sand wood? The oscillating multi-tool (named because it moves side to side while oscillating around a center axis) can do it all. Just connect the right attachment and you're in business.

When we tested 14 models in our labs, we found that many can do these jobs remarkably quickly and quietly. The top models, shown here, excel at slicing through materials with ease—from oak molding to copper piping—and are brilliant at sanding and removing grout too. If you already own a cordless drill or impact driver, it's smart to look for a cordless multi-tool from the same brand because the tools are able to share same-voltage batteries and chargers.

Flex Oscillating Multi-Tool Kit (FX4111-1A) cordless, $200

95 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 WOOD
- 5/5 METAL
- 5/5 GROUT

Fein MultiMaster MM 500 Plus Oscillating MultiTool Kit corded, $200

92 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 WOOD
- 5/5 METAL
- 5/5 GROUT

Avid Power Tools 3.5A Oscillating Multi-Tool (MW146) corded, $60

91 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 WOOD
- 5/5 METAL
- 5/5 GROUT

87 OVERALL SCORE

DeWalt 20V Max XR 3-Speed Cordless Oscillating Multi-Tool (DCS356B) $130

- 5/5 WOOD
- 5/5 METAL
- 5/5 GROUT

87 OVERALL SCORE

Dremel Multi-Max Oscillating Tool Kit (MM50-01) corded, $104

- 5/5 WOOD
- 4/5 METAL
- 5/5 GROUT

86 OVERALL SCORE

Makita 18V LXT Lithium-Ion Cordless Oscillating Multi-Tool (XMT03Z) $150

- 4/5 WOOD
- 5/5 METAL
- 5/5 GROUT

84 OVERALL SCORE

Milwaukee M18 Cordless Multi-Tool (2626-20) $140

- 5/5 WOOD
- 5/5 METAL
- 4/5 GROUT

83 OVERALL SCORE

Bosch 18V EC Brushless StarlockPlus Oscillating Multi-Tool (GOP18V-28N) cordless, $142

- 5/5 WOOD
- 4/5 METAL
- 5/5 GROUT

82 OVERALL SCORE

Ryobi 18V ONE+ Multi-Tool (P343B) cordless, $80

- 5/5 WOOD
- 4/5 METAL
- 4/5 GROUT

PHOTO, TOP: SCOTT MEADOWS/CONSUMER REPORTS; CONSUMER REPORTS, MANUFACTURERS

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT **CR.ORG/MORE**.

TOYOTA TUNDRA PICKUP TRUCKS

Toyota is recalling 168,179 2022-2023 Tundra and Tundra Hybrid pickup trucks because a plastic fuel line may start to leak and cause a fire. During regular driving, the plastic tube might rub against the brake line, which could wear out the plastic and cause a fuel leak. If this happens, owners may notice the smell of gas or leaking fuel.
What to do: Owners of recalled vehicles will be notified to take their vehicles to a Toyota dealer. The dealers will replace the fuel tube at no charge. Toyota is currently preparing the remedy parts for this recall, but in the meantime, the dealers will install protective materials and a clamp on the fuel tube at no cost to customers. Call Toyota at 800-331-4331 for details. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration campaign number is 23V-566, and the Ford recall numbers are 23TA09 and 23TB09.

UBIO LABS POWER BANKS

Costco is recalling about 350,000 Ubio Labs power bank portable chargers because they can overheat and ignite, posing a fire hazard. Single power banks were sold at Costco stores nationwide and online at costco.com from March 2019 through December 2020 for about $32; two-packs were sold from September 2018 through December 2020 for about $40.
What to do: Stop using the power bank. Call Costco at 800-774-2678 or go to costco.com for details and to get a full refund. Ubio Labs is no longer in operation.

TARGET THRESHOLD GLASS JAR CANDLES

Target is recalling about 2.2 million Threshold Glass Jar candles because the jar can crack or break during use, posing laceration and burn hazards. The candles were sold at Target stores nationwide and on target.com from February 2020 through July 2023 for $3 to $12.
What to do: Stop using the candle. Return it to any Target store for a full refund, or go to help.target.com/help to receive a prepaid return mailing label.

GE, KENMORE, NORPOLE, SEABREEZE, AND SOLEUSAIR DEHUMIDIFIERS

Gree is recalling about 1.56 million dehumidifiers because they can overheat, smoke, and catch fire, posing fire and burn hazards. The recall involves 42 models of dehumidifiers with brand names GE, Kenmore, Norpole, Seabreeze, and SoleusAir manufactured between January 2011 and February 2014. They were sold at Home Depot, Lowe's, Menards, Sam's Club, Sears, Walmart, and other stores nationwide from 2011 through 2014 for $110 to $400.
What to do: Stop using the dehumidifier and unplug it. Go to global.gree.com/usa/channels/840.html to identify the recalled models and sign up to be contacted with information on how to register for the recall.

ROBO ALIVE BATH TOYS

Zuru is recalling about 7.5 million Robo Alive Junior Baby Shark Sing & Swim bath toys (full-sized) and Robo Alive Junior Mini Baby Shark Swimming bath toys (mini-sized) because the hard plastic top fin of the shark poses risks of impalement, lacerations, and punctures. The bath toys were sold at CVS Pharmacy, Dollar General Corp., Family Dollar Services, HEB, Meijer, Ross, Target, TJX Companies, Walgreens, and Walmart stores nationwide and online at Amazon, target.com, walmart.com, and other websites. The full-sized Baby Shark bath toys were sold from May 2019 through March 2023 for $13 to $15. The Mini Baby Shark bath toys were sold from July 2020 through June 2023 for $6 to $20.
What to do: Stop using the toys. Call Zuru at 833-820-0839 or go to zurutoys.com for details and instructions to get a full refund.

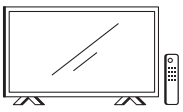
BELLA, COOKS, AND CRUX PRESSURE COOKERS

Sensio is recalling about 860,000 electric and stovetop pressure cookers because the lid can unlock and be removed during use, causing the hot contents to splash out, posing a burn hazard. The recall involves Bella, Bella Pro Series, Cooks, and Crux electric pressure cookers, and Bella stovetop pressure cookers. The cookers were sold at JCPenney, Kohl's, Lowe's, Macy's, and Target stores nationwide, and online at Amazon and other websites from September 2015 through September 2020 for $30 to $70 for the electric pressure cookers and for $8 to $18 for the stovetop pressure cookers.
What to do: Stop using the cooker. Call Sensio at 855-647-3125 or go to bellahousewares.com for details and to get a refund.

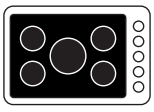
PHOTO: TOYOTA. ICONS: RODRIGO DAMATI

NOVEMBER IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

TELEVISIONS

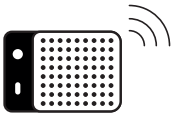


COOKTOPS



DECEMBER IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

WIRELESS & BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS



TOASTERS & TOASTER OVENS

PRODUCT UPDATE

THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

The Best Cameras From Our Tests

Not always satisfied with photos from your cell phone? The new generation of stand-alone cameras makes taking great shots a snap.

by Allen St. John

MIRRORLESS
Nikon Z 50
$1,000
83 OVERALL SCORE

POINT-AND-SHOOT
Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX10
$450
81 OVERALL SCORE

HAS THIS EVER happened to you? You're walking through the park, and you spot a colorful bird perched in a tree, pull out your phone, and take a picture. But the image is so blurry and poorly lit that you delete it.

If you've been disappointed by your cell phone's ability to capture a gorgeous sunset or a fast-moving soccer game, it might be time to consider getting a stand-alone camera. While today's smartphones have capable cameras, their tiny lenses do limit image quality. A dedicated camera—like the one you probably had once upon a time—can give you truly excellent images.

Like the film cameras of decades ago, modern digital models can take sharp zoom shots and offer you the option of adjusting the exposure settings. But in recent years, cameras have become even better. Today's best cameras are simple to use, and they're light enough that it's a breeze to bring them on a walk. Plus, a Consumer Reports survey of members who purchased cameras between 2014 and 2022 reveals that buyers were generally very satisfied and that the current models are quite reliable—though there is variation among brands.

What to get? You'll probably be happiest with one of two types of digital camera: either an advanced point-and-shoot or a mirrorless model. Here's a rundown on both, and how to decide what's best for you.

The Virtues of a Point-and-Shoot

THE "ADVANCED" POINT-AND-SHOOT cameras that CR tests—with these models, you essentially aim at your subject and snap the photo—are ideal for people who want high-quality pictures but don't want to swap in a variety of lenses.

These cameras are generally small and lightweight. Some will fit easily in your pocket. Plus, the models in our ratings (which start on page 25) are user-friendly. They can automatically focus for you and can compensate for tricky lighting, which you'll encounter if you're shooting a moonrise or a large family gathering on a sunny beach.

But these cameras don't limit you to fully automatic shooting. They also come with controls for times when you want to play with exposure settings.

Like basic point-and-shoot cameras, the advanced models don't let you swap lenses. But you don't have to sacrifice performance: CR's testers find that the lenses on these cameras produce images that can be just as good as those you get from an interchangeable-lens camera.

For instance, the Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX10 camera (see facing page) has a high-quality lens that zooms from 24 mm to 72 mm, covering the sweet spot for everything from wide-angle landscapes to intimate portraits.

Stepping Up to a Mirrorless Model

DO YOU YEARN to photograph baseball players in action? Or animals in their natural habitat—and capture every detail from a distance?

If so, you might prefer a camera that lets you switch lenses, and CR's experts suggest mirrorless models for most people. These are sleek and quiet, and their bright viewfinders and screens allow you to frame and focus images with ease. They're also much lighter than the single-lens reflex cameras you may have used in the past. (We still have a few digital SLRs in our ratings.)

The best mirrorless cameras come with zoom lenses, like the 16-50 mm lens sold with the Nikon Z 50 (see facing page), that deliver superb results for most subjects. But you can also swap in telephoto, wide-angle, and macro lenses for special situations. (See "Choosing the Perfect Lens," on page 22.)

Mirrorless models offer a number of advanced settings. For instance, some cameras have a special autofocus mode that may be called "eye AF" (the term varies by brand). It recognizes when you're aiming at a face and automatically focuses on the iris of the subject's eye. Eye AF also learns the faces of people—and even pets—you photograph frequently, and makes sure they're in focus and exposed properly, no matter where they are in the frame. Most mirrorless models can record high-resolution 4K video too.

Top-notch mirrorless cameras also provide advanced image stabilization, which is helpful in many situations. A case in point: Let's say you're shooting on a dimly lit, wooded path. A slow shutter speed can let in more light. But having the shutter open longer tends to produce blurry images because of the subtle shaking of your hands as you hold the camera. With advanced image stabilization, such shots will come out sharp and well lit.

PROP STYLING BY ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS

FINDING THE MODEL FOR YOU

Once you've settled on a camera type, you'll need to decide on a specific model. There are two major factors to consider: the key features you may want and how comfortable a particular camera is to hold and use.

Any highly rated camera will work well for most people, and in almost any situation. But some types of photography call for specific features.

If you plan to shoot sports, wildlife, or kids who are often in motion, choose a camera with a fast maximum shutter speed (1/8000 of a second can freeze the action). Also look for models with a high rating for image stabilization, to help you produce blur-free pictures.

If you'll be shooting a lot indoors, and especially if you're interested in portrait photography, look for a bigger maximum aperture. You'll find that f/4 is typical, while f/2.8 is better. (Smaller numbers equal larger apertures.) Also, choose a model from our ratings with solid marks for flash performance—and be aware that not all newer cameras have a built-in flash.

Once you've narrowed your choices, it's smart to go to a store in person to test-drive them. A camera store is ideal, but you can also find demo models to handle at big chains such as Best Buy. Consider the following four questions as you do your shopping.

Is it comfortable to hold?

One of the major differences among brands and models is the way a camera body feels when you're cradling it in your hands. So take a few minutes and make sure any model you're considering has the right fit for you. For example, if you have small hands, you may find yourself struggling to reach an important control on a larger camera.

Are the viewfinder and screen easy to see?

Most modern cameras have a viewfinder that you can peer through, plus a pivoting external screen that lets you compose your image the way you would with a smartphone. It's fine to shoot either way, but if you wear glasses, make sure you can see through the entire viewfinder. And check to make sure the screen is bright enough when you're shooting in sunlight.

Do the menus make sense?

On today's cameras, you'll operate settings through a small screen, so look for a settings menu that's easy to read and seems logical to you. Companies differ in how they organize these menus, which is one reason many camera buffs become loyal to one brand, such as Canon, Nikon, or Sony. They don't want to relearn the settings when they buy a new camera.

Can you return an online purchase?

You may be unable to locate a camera you're considering in a nearby store. Some camera retailers, such as B&H Photo Video, also sell online, and their experts can answer questions by phone. But if you do buy online, choose a retailer with a generous return policy, in case the camera you order doesn't feel right in your hands, or you have other problems with it.

PHOTO, TOP RIGHT: SARAH ANNE WARD; PROP STYLING: ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS. PHOTOS, BOTTOM: GETTY IMAGES (3)

CHOOSING THE PERFECT LENS

As you become a more accomplished photographer, you may find that the zoom lens that came with your mirrorless camera, versatile as it is, can't do everything you'd like. You're probably familiar with telephoto lenses that let you zoom in on distant action. But wide angle and macro lenses can be equally important for certain subjects. The first step is to think about the kind of photography you want to do. Then decide on whether to buy an additional lens and which one to select. You can also rent a lens for a special occasion, such as a wildlife safari.

Wildlife and Action Shots
For taking pictures of birds and other animals, a really long zoom telephoto lens—over 200 mm, or even bigger than 500 mm—lets you fill the frame from a distance. These lenses also work well for sports photography.

ICONS BY ELIAS STEIN

THE RIGHT ACCESSORIES

These items can help you stay organized and ready to capture the images you want, quickly and beautifully.

① Functional Camera Bag
A camera bag such as the compact, weather-resistant Wandrd Rogue 9L Sling, $159, will allow you to grab a camera, lens, or other needed accessory at a moment's notice.

② Monopod
A monopod like the Manfrotto Element MII, $55, gives you most of the stability of a tripod—key when using a telephoto lens—but weighs less. Most monopods can also double as walking sticks.

③ Memory Cards & Spare Batteries
Carrying extra batteries and memory cards can mean the difference between getting more photographs you'll love and being forced to stop for the day.

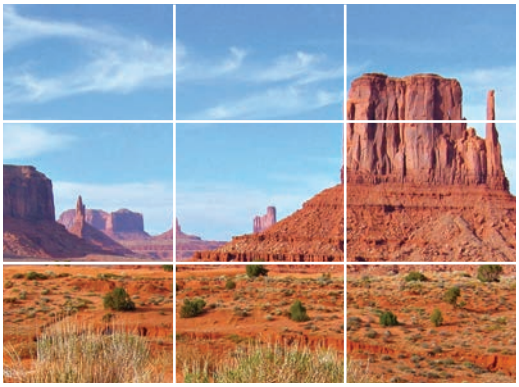
④ External Mic
Modern cameras can take crystal-clear video. To capture equally good audio, invest in an easy-to-use external microphone, such as the Røde VideoMicro II, $79.

Portraits and Low-Light Shots
If you're shooting portraits, a lens with a maximum aperture of f/1.8 or larger can help your subject pop against an artfully blurred background. The same lens can also work quite well when you're shooting in low-light situations.

Close-Ups
To capture the fine details of an object, whether it's an exotic flower or a rare stamp, you need a macro lens, which will let you focus from an extremely short distance. Other camera lenses can't produce sharp images in that situation.

6 EASY TIPS FOR BETTER PHOTOS

What's the difference between a photographer and someone who simply takes pictures? A picture-taker picks up the camera only when it's a special occasion, be it a graduation or a trip to Greece. A photographer enjoys bringing a camera everywhere from a neighborhood walk to a trip to the hardware store. Got a new camera? It can inspire you to think like a photographer. And these tips can help you shoot like one too.



Get Close to Your Subject

Moving in really close gives you two advantages. For one, you gain a unique perspective that will feel fresh and intriguing. And because you're filling the frame, you don't have to worry about distractions in the background. When shooting from close up, use the wide-angle setting on your zoom lens.

Experiment With Manual Settings

Understanding exposure can help you capture the evocative lighting you see in your mind's eye. To develop this skill, you could take a photography course. Or you could just play with your camera.

Here's how to get started: Most cameras have an "exposure compensation" dial or button. Take a shot with a normal automatic exposure. Then take shots at +1 and +2, and see how the image brightens. (Eventually, it will become overexposed.) Next, go the other way, underexposing the image by increments. The picture will be darker—and that moodiness may enhance the image. Set the compensation back to zero when you're done. But going forward, don't be afraid to override the camera's automatic setting.

Take Lots of Shots

With modern digital memory cards, you can take hundreds of shots without worrying about running out of film, or the cost of processing. Use that freedom.

Switch Up Your Framing

In Steven Spielberg's movie "The Fabelmans," legendary director John Ford tells an aspiring filmmaker that it's interesting to frame a shot so that the horizon is at the bottom. Place the horizon at the top? Also interesting. But when the horizon is in the middle, he says, it's "boring as [bleep]."

Framing your shot well—deciding just what to include and where—makes any subject more intriguing. One method is "the rule of thirds," which basically means placing your subject off-center. Mentally divide the image into thirds, vertically and horizontally. (Imagine you're placing a tic-tac-toe board on top of the shot.) Then shoot so that your subject is on one of those lines, or where two lines meet. Many cameras can overlay this kind of grid on your viewfinder or a screen to help.

Play with multiple perspectives too. Hold your camera above your head and tilt it down. Shoot even if you can't see the viewfinder. You might come up with something even John Ford would approve of.

Embrace 'Poor' Light

Gray day? The bright sunshine most of us love in real life isn't ideal for photography. Overcast conditions are more likely to give you even lighting and gorgeous, saturated colors.

Shoot Vertically

Most cameras are designed to shoot horizontally. But experiment by turning your camera 90 degrees for a fresh look at a subject, whether it's a skyscraper or a friend.

PHOTOS, FROM TOP: SANDRA LEIDHOLDT/GETTY IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES; SEAN O'ROURKE/GETTY IMAGES

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features		
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Image quality	Ease of use	Video quality	Flash photos	Image stabilization	Shutter speed range	Total weight (oz.)	Maximum aperture
ADVANCED POINT-AND-SHOOT CAMERAS												
✓ **Fujifilm** X100V	89	$2,300	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	30 - 1/4000	18	NA
✓ **Canon** PowerShot G7 X Mark II	83	$630	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	1 - 1/2000	11	NA
✓ **Sony** Cyber-shot RX10 IV	83	$1,700	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❗	⏫	30 - 1/32000	41	NA
✓ **Canon** PowerShot G5 X Mark II	82	$880	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	❗	⏫	15 - 1/2000	12	NA
✓ **Sony** Cyber-shot RX100 VA	82	$1,000	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	❗	⏫	30 - 1/2000	11	NA
✓ **Sony** Cyber-shot RX100 VI	82	$830	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❗	⏫	30 - 1/32000	11	NA
✓ **Canon** PowerShot G7 X Mark III	81	$750	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	❗	⏫	30 - 1/25650	11	NA
✓ **Panasonic** Lumix DMC-LX10	81	$450	❗	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	60 - 1/16000	11	NA
✓ **Leica** V-Lux 5	80	$1,600	–	–	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	120 - 1/4000	29	NA
✓ **Sony** Cyber-shot RX100 V	80	$1,000	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	30 - 1/32000	11	NA
✓ **Sony** Cyber-shot RX100 VII	80	$1,300	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	❗	⏫	30 - 1/32000	11	NA
✓ **Sony** Cyber-shot RX1R II	80	$3,300	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/4000	20	NA
Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ2500	78	$900	❗	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	❗	60 - 1/16000	36	NA
Ricoh GR III	78	$970	–	–	🔼	🔼	❗	NA	⏫	30 - 1/4000	9	NA
Sony Cyber-shot RX100 III	78	$750	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	⏫	🔼	30 - 1/2000	10	NA
Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS100	78	$450	❗	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	60 - 1/16000	11	NA
Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ1000 II	77	$850	❗	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	❗	❗	60 - 1/4000	29	NA
Sony ZV-1F	76	$500	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	NA	⏫	0.25 - 1/32000	9	NA
Sony ZV-1	74	$750	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	NA	🔽	30 - 1/2000	10	NA
Canon PowerShot SX70 HS	64	$600	⏫	🔼	❗	🔼	❗	🔽	⏬	1 - 1/2000	20	NA
MIRRORLESS CAMERAS												
✓ **Fujifilm** X-T4 w/16-80 mm OIS	92	$2,200	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	NA	⏫	4 - 1/8000	24	4.0
✓ **Fujifilm** X-T4 w/18-55 mm OIS	91	$1,950	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	NA	⏫	4 - 1/8000	24	2.8
✓ **Nikon** Z 6 w/24-70 mm S	90	$2,600	❗	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	38	4.0
✓ **Fujifilm** X-H2 w/16-80 mm	88	$2,400	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	NA	⏫	4 - 1/8000	26	4.0
✓ **Nikon** Z 7 w/24-70 mm S	88	$3,200	❗	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	🔼	30 - 1/8000	25	4.0
✓ **Canon** Eos R6 w/RF 24-105 mm	88	$3,100	🔼	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	NA	🔼	30 - 1/8000	24	4.0
✓ **Sony** Alpha A7 III w/28-70 mm OSS	88	$2,200	🔼	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	24	3.5

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features		
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Image quality	Ease of use	Video quality	Flash photos	Image stabilization	Shutter speed range	Total weight (oz.)	Maximum aperture
MIRRORLESS CAMERAS *Continued*												
Fujifilm X-T5 w/18-55 mm	87	$2,100	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	22	2.8
Canon Eos R6 Mark II w/24-105 mm	87	$2,800	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	26	4.0
Panasonic Lumix DC-GH6 w/12-60 mm	86	$2,300	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	60 - 1/8000	31	3.5
Nikon Z 6 II w/Z 24-70 mm	86	$2,600	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	26	4.0
Canon Eos R w/24-105 mm IS USM	86	$2,500	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	25	4.0
Canon Eos R10 w/18-45 mm IS STM	85	$980	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	30 - 1/4000	17	4.5
Nikon Z 7 II w/24-70 mm S	85	$3,600	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	26	4.0
Sony Alpha A7 II w/FE 28-70 mm f/3.5-5.6	85	$1,600	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	22	3.5
Sony Alpha 7C w/FE 28-60 mm	85	$2,100	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/4000	19	4.0
Panasonic Lumix DC-S1 w/24-105 mm	84	$3,400	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	60 - 1/8000	36	4.0
Canon Eos R7 w/18-150 mm IS STM	84	$1,800	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	24	3.5
Nikon Z 30 w/18-140 mm	84	$1,300	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/4000	15	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DC-GH5 w/12-60 mm	84	$1,800	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	60 - 1/16000	26	3.5
Nikon Z fc w/16-50 mm	83	$1,100	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/4000	23	0.57
Nikon Z 50 w/16-50 mm	83	$1,000	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	30 - 1/4000	17	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DC-G9 w/12-60 mm	83	$1,100	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	60 - 1/32000	25	3.5
Canon Eos R10 w/18-150 mm IS STM	83	$1,380	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	30 - 1/4000	17	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DC-S5 w/20-60 mm	83	$1,600	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	60 - 1/8000	27	3.5
Olympus OM-D E-M1 III w/12-40 mm	82	$2,500	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	60 - 1/8000	22	2.8
Canon Eos RP w/RF 24-105 mm	82	$1,300	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/4000	19	4.0
Nikon Z 5 w/24-50 mm	82	$1,600	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/8000	21	4.0
Canon Eos M50 Mark II w/15-45 mm	81	$600	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	30 - 1/4000	15	3.5
Nikon Z 30 w/16-50 mm	81	$800	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	30 - 1/4000	15	3.5
Olympus OM-1 w/12-40 mm Pro II	81	$2,800	⏸	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	⏫	60 - 1/8000	23	2.8
Canon Eos M6 Mark II w/15-45 mm	81	$1,100	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏸	⏫	30 - 1/4000	16	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DC-G95 w/12-60 mm	81	$800	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏸	⏫	60 - 1/4000	20	3.5
Canon Eos M200 w/15-45 mm IS STM	80	$550	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	30 - 1/4000	12	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DMC-G85 w/12-60 mm f/3.5-5.6 Power OIS	80	$700	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	60 - 1/16000	19	3.5

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features		
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Image quality	Ease of use	Video quality	Flash photos	Image stabilization	Shutter speed range	Total weight (oz.)	Maximum aperture
MIRRORLESS CAMERAS *Continued*												
✓ **Olympus** OM-D E-M1 III w/12-100 mm	80	$2,700	–	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	NA	⇈	60 - 1/8000	22	4.0
✓ **Panasonic** Lumix DMC-G7K w/14-42 mm	80	$550	⌃	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	–	⇈	60 - 1/16000	16	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DC-GH5 II w/12-60 mm	79	$1,800	⌃	⇈	⌃	⇈	⇈	NA	⌃	60 - 1/8000	28	3.5
Sony Alpha A6400 w/E 18-135 mm	79	$1,300	⌃	⇈	⌃	⌃	⇈	–	⇈	30 - 1/4000	14	3.5
Sony Alpha A6600 w/18-135 mm	79	$1,800	⌃	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	NA	⌃	30 - 1/4000	19	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DMC-GX85 w/12-32 mm F3.5-5.6 ASPH. Mega OIS	78	$650	⌃	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⇈	60 - 1/16000	16	3.5
Panasonic Lumix DC-G100 w/12-32 mm	78	$500	⌃	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⇈	60 - 1/500	12	3.5
Sony Alpha ZV-E10 w/16-50 mm	77	$800	⌃	⇈	⌃	–	⌃	NA	⇈	30 - 1/4000	17	0.56
Olympus OM-5 w/12-45 mm	77	$1,600	–	⇈	⌃	⌃	–	NA	⇈	60 - 1/8000	16	4.0
Canon Eos M6 w/18-150 mm IS STM	76	$800	⌃	⇈	⌃	⌃	–	–	⇈	30 - 1/4000	15	3.5
Olympus OM-D E-M5 III w/14-150 mm	76	$1,700	–	⇈	⌃	⌃	–	–	⇈	60 - 1/8000	16	4.0
Sony Alpha A6400 w/E PZ 16-50 mm	75	$1,000	⌃	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	–	⌃	30 - 1/4000	15	3.5
Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark IV w/14-42 mm	71	$800	–	⇈	⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	60 - 1/500	14	3.5
SINGLE-LENS REFLEX CAMERAS												
✓ **Canon** Eos 850D Rebel T8i w/18-55 mm	81	$900	⇈	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	⇈	⇈	30 - 1/4000	20	4.0
✓ **Canon** Eos 90D w/18-55 mm IS STM	80	$1,230	⇈	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	⇈	⇈	30 - 1/4000	25	4.0
✓ **Canon** Eos 6D Mark II w/24-105 mm IS STM	80	$1,600	⇈	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	NA	⇈	30 - 1/4000	29	3.5
Canon Rebel SL3 w/18-55 mm	78	$750	⇈	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	30 - 1/4000	18	4.0
Canon Eos 90D w/18-135 mm IS USM Nano	77	$1,600	⇈	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	⇈	⌃	30 - 1/4000	25	3.5
Canon Eos 2000D Rebel T7 w/18-55 mm	75	$400	⇈	⇈	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	30 - 1/4000	17	3.5
Nikon D780 w/24-120 mm VR	71	$2,800	⌃	⇈	–	⌃	⌃	NA	–	30 - 1/8000	30	4.0
Pentax KF w/18-55 mm	70	$950	–	–	⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⇈	30 - 1/6000	26	3.5
Nikon D7500 w/18-140 mm VR	68	$1,400	⌃	⇈	–	⌃	⌃	⌃	–	30 - 1/8000	26	3.5

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/cameras.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines test results with data from the 2020, 2021, and 2022 Spring Quarterly Surveys of CR members. **Predicted reliability,** based on survey data, indicates the likelihood that new models from the brand will develop problems within the four years. **Owner satisfaction,** also survey-based, reflects the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend the camera they bought. A gray dash (–) indicates insufficient data for a brand-level rating. **Image quality** combines several tests, including regular, low-light, and flash photos; color tests; and more. **Ease of use** covers the camera's controls, manual, response time, and focusing. **Video quality** covers both regular and low light; audio is also considered. **Flash photos** captures a built-in flash's output and evenness of illumination. **Image stabilization** reflects how well the camera compensates for handheld camera shake.

Top Picks 2023

NEXT-LEVEL PERFORMANCE AND RELIABILITY. SAFETY FEATURES YOU CAN TRUST. GREAT PRICES.

Many of the thousands of products CR tests each year boast an impressive mix of those attributes, and we share them with you in the ratings we include in each issue. But a few products impress our experts so much they deserve special attention. These selections not only sail through our tough tests, they also offer something extra, like a problem-solving design, super-energy-efficient operation, or an unbelievably low price. They're the very best of the best. Read on to see the Top Picks of 2023—the 101 products that CR's experts recommend to their families, friends, and now, to you.

46°

CONTINENTAL

315°NW
61
JUST UPDATED

We Love ... Handy Kitchen Helpers

Drip Coffee Makers

87 TOP DRIP MODEL
Calphalon 14-Cup Programmable Coffee Maker $110

Easy to set up, simple to program, and mess-free, this model makes a satisfying pot every time. For more versatility, the Ninja (far right) has drip, K-Cup, and over-ice functions.

83 BUDGET-FRIENDLY BREWER
Hamilton Beach 12-Cup Programmable 49465R $40

76 FLEXIBLE CHOICE
Ninja DualBrew Pro 12-Cup CFP301 Coffee Maker $200

Dutch Ovens

87 ALL-AROUND WINNER
Spice by Tia Mowry Savory Saffron Enameled Cast-Iron Dutch Oven $80

From simmering rich sauces to baking up bread with a crispy crust, this colorful pot wowed our testers at every turn. Plus, it heats up quickly and wipes clean with ease.

80

AN EVEN NICER PRICE
Ayesha Curry Enameled Cast-Iron Dutch Oven $57

83

LIGHTER TO LIFT
Merten & Storck Enameled Iron 1873 Dutch Oven $245

Blenders

88 SUPER-POWERFUL PICK
Vitamix Professional 750 $630

The top-rated Vitamix is one of the most amped-up blenders we've tested. With 1,656 watts of power (500 to 800 is typical) it makes silky smooth purées and can even heat up soup.

68 GOOD VALUE
Ninja MasterPrep Professional QB1004 $60

76 EASY-TO-USE PERSONAL MODEL
Beast Blender $155

THE BETTER DEAL

Stand Mixers

HIGHER PRICE
$800

81
Waring Commercial Luna WSM7L

BETTER PRICE
$250

79
Hamilton Beach Professional All-Metal 63240

PHOTOS: SARAH ANNE WARD; PROP STYLING: ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS (AIR FRYER); CONSUMER REPORTS (14); MANUFACTURERS (1)

WORSE BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY | CR GREEN CHOICE

Mary Beth Quirk
Managing Editor,
Shopping & Deals

I OWN THIS!

I bought the Aerolatte during a Black Friday sale last year, and I've been reaching for it every morning since. It's easy to use and clean, it foams all kinds of milk, including skim or oat, and it makes my daily cup feel just a bit fancier.

MILK FROTHER
Aerolatte Milk Frother
$30

THE LOWDOWN:
Both mixers offer great performance. The Hamilton Beach was a bit better at whipping cream, and the Waring was quieter. But you can use attachments with the Hamilton Beach, so it's more versatile. And at 15 pounds, it's easier to lift than the 33-pound Waring.

New & Cool

Air Fryer With a View

Like other top models in our tests, this air fryer turns out crispy fries, tender veggies, and more—and it's easy to program and clean. What sets it apart is its design. The window on the food basket lets you monitor browning without stopping the cooking process.

76

Instant Vortex Plus 140-3089-01
$100

Induction Range

If you're used to a traditional electric smoothtop range, you'll be pleasantly surprised by the fast heating and precise control of an induction model. And this isn't just the best induction option we've seen, it's the single best range in our ratings, period.

94

LG LSE4616ST
$2,700

Coffee Chiller

Love a cold coffee drink but hate how melting ice waters it down? Here's your fix. Fill two of the HyperChiller's three separate inner chambers with water, freeze, then pour your hot coffee into the third for nonwatery cold coffee 60 seconds later.

HyperChiller
$25

New & Cool

Quiet Ceiling Fan

The first thing you notice about the MinkaAire Light Wave is the blades: They're molded into the shape of a gentle wave. This fan easily surfed to the top of our ratings. Airflow is impressive, and the fan is very quiet on both high and low settings.

90 **MinkaAire Light Wave 52** $360

77

Kohler Moxie BT Showerhead $70

Showerhead + Music

Our top-rated single-setting showerhead wowed us with its strong, steady stream and efficient performance. The fun part: It comes with a removable Bluetooth speaker, so you can listen to your tunes as you shampoo.

Washer/Dryer Combo

This combination washer and dryer not only has a single footprint, it eliminates the chore of transferring loads between machines. And it doesn't require a vent, so it can be installed anywhere near a water hookup. Washing performance was solid in our tests. But drying is slow—hence its lower score as a dryer.

70 WASHER 49 DRYER

GE Profile PFQ97HSPVDS $2,605

Tanya Christian
Writer, Home

I OWN THIS!

The mattress in my guest room is comfortable, but it's a little too firm for some visitors. So I added the Dormeo topper—CR's top-rated model—to give my guests a supportive yet cushiony feel. I love that it has a breathable, ventilated design and corner straps to hold it in place.

94

MATTRESS TOPPER

Dormeo Mattress Topper $380

We Love ... Fresh, Clean Spaces

THE BETTER DEAL

Sheets

HIGHER PRICE
$425

66 ✓ **Matouk Sierra**

BETTER PRICE
$190

67 ✓ **Brooklinen Luxe Core**

THE LOWDOWN:
Both 100 percent cotton sheet sets impressed our testers: Their Overall Scores are just a point apart. But while the Matouk Sierra sheets did slightly better on our strength test thanks to their sturdy seams and strong tear-resistance, when it comes to softness, Brooklinen's Luxe Core sheets won out. They also withstood wrinkling and shrinking better than the Matouk, for $235 less per set.

PHOTOS: CONSUMER REPORTS (12); MANUFACTURERS (2)

Air Purifiers

86

BEST FOR BEDROOMS
✓ **Blueair Blue Pure 211i Max Air Purifier** $315

This Blueair receives our top score for dust, pollen, and smoke removal at both high- and low-speed settings—ideal in a bedroom where you may prefer the quieter lower mode. It's easy to use, and the prefilter is machine washable.

67

APPEALING PRICE
✓ **Insignia NS-APMWH2** $200

93

TOP-RATED MODEL
✓ **Coway Airmega ProX 3522F** $1,000

Bagless Upright Vacuums

77

GREAT FOR ALL SURFACES
✓ **Shark Stratos AZ3002** $500

The Shark aced our tests on carpet and hardwood floors. It excels at picking up pet hair and capturing all the dirt and dust it collects—important if you have allergies.

73

GOOD FOR WOOD FLOORS
✓ **Shark Rotator Professional Lift-Away NV501** $260

75

VALUE VAC
✓ **Kenmore Pet Friendly Cross-Over DU3017** $180

Washing Machines

87

EXCEPTIONAL FRONT-LOADER
$ ✓ **LG WM4000HWA** $850

This water- and energy-efficient front-loader offers top-notch washing performance and built-in automatic detergent and fabric softener dispensers. It even has a steam-cleaning option to help remove extra-tough stains.

73

BARGAIN AGITATOR TOP-LOADER
$ ✓ **Samsung WA44A3205AW** $770

84

BEST HIGH-EFFICIENCY TOP-LOADER
$ ✓ **LG WT7150CW** $700

WORSE — BETTER | ✓ CR RECOMMENDED | $ CR SMART BUY | ✓ CR GREEN CHOICE

We Love ... Gear That Keeps You Well

Blood Pressure Monitors

86

BEST OVERALL CHOICE

Omron Platinum BP5450 (Amazon) $79

Our most accurate monitor also earned high marks for comfort and convenience. It can record scores for multiple users, so it's a good choice if both you and your spouse want to track your numbers.

79

WINNING WRIST MODEL

Omron 7 Series BP6350 $65

81

EXCELLENT ACCURACY FOR LESS

A&D Medical UA767F Blood Pressure Monitor
$52

Electric Toothbrushes

83

SUPER CLEANING POWER

Oral-B iO 7 Series Toothbrush $200

This brush did a great job in our tests of teeth cleaning, and it's easy to use and relatively quiet. It's equipped with a 2-minute timer and a pressure sensor to help you make sure you're not brushing too hard.

77

TOP SONIC MODEL

Philips Sonicare ProtectiveClean 6100 Toothbrush
$120

62

EFFECTIVE BUDGET BRUSH

Shyn Sonic
$55

Pasta Sauces

81

GREAT FLAVOR, LOWER SODIUM

The Silver Palate Low Sodium Marinara
$6.40 for 25 oz.

One of our highest-ranking sauces, this marinara has fresh tomato and garlic flavor, and just 140 mg of sodium per serving.

73

NICE PRICE

Wellsley Farms (BJ's) Italian Style Marinara
$9 for a 2-pack of 32 oz. each

71

TASTY TOMATO BASIL

Hoboken Farms Basil Marinara
$12 for 25 oz.

THE BETTER DEAL

Sunscreens

HIGHER PRICE
$38

73

La Roche-Posay Anthelios Melt-In Milk Lotion SPF 60
5 oz.

BETTER PRICE
$9

100

Coppertone Water Babies Lotion SPF 50
8 oz.

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED

Trisha Calvo,
Deputy Editor,
Health & Food

I EAT THIS!

DARK-CHOCOLATE BAR
Taza Organic Deliciously Dark Chocolate 70% Cacao
$5 for a 2.5-oz. bar

I made this my chocolate mainstay after CR's tests of heavy metals in chocolate showed it was one of our safer picks. I love the rich flavor and the unique stone-ground texture.

THE LOWDOWN:
This La Roche-Posay lotion offers great sun protection in an unscented formula—but it's pricey. Coppertone Water Babies protects even better (it got a perfect score in our ratings) and costs far less. But it does have a fragrance and feels a little greasy.

PHOTOS: SARAH ANNE WARD; PROP STYLING: ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS (FITNESS TRACKER). CONSUMER REPORTS (12); MANUFACTURERS (4)

New & Cool

85
Fitbit Inspire 3 $100

Slim Fitness Tracker

A bright color display makes the Fitbit particularly easy to read. It's lightweight and slim, and it monitors basics like heart rate and steps as well as your stress levels and sleep. And at $100, it's a less expensive alternative to a smartwatch.

Lexie Lumen Self-Fitting OTC
$800

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

Programming these hearing aids for your specific needs is simple. Just take a quick hearing evaluation on the connected Lexie app and it will do the rest. They also come with telecoil, a highly useful feature that taps into assistive listening systems at theaters, places of worship, airports, and more.

Rowing Machine With Everything

Tired of the treadmill? Workouts on a rowing machine provide a nonweight-bearing, full-body cardiovascular workout. Our top-rated model is exceptionally easy to use, boasting sound construction, ergonomic operation, and a big screen that displays your workout stats and a variety of exercise programming.

95
Peloton Row Basics $2,995

Smokeless Firepit

If you've ever spent a "cozy" outdoor evening wiping the tears from your smoke-stung eyes, you'll appreciate that this firepit offers a satisfying blaze—with less irritating smoke.

New & Cool

90

Cuisinart Cleanburn Firepit $249

Sprinkler and Hose Timer

Just plug your hose into the Rachio Smart Hose Timer to automate your sprinkler. It will track the local weather forecast and adjust how much it waters accordingly—so you won't waste water or money.

Rachio Smart Hose Timer
$100

GE Cync Outdoor Smart Plug CPLGOD2BLG1
$30

Versatile Smart Plug

The GE Cync Outdoor Smart Plug makes it easy to remotely control and set timers for string lights, holiday inflatables, and more. It's simple to set up and use, plus it offers two outlets that you can operate independently.

Natalie van der Meer
Deputy Editor, Print

I OWN THIS!

A lot of pressure washers are big and cumbersome, so I was happy to find this DeWalt among the top models in CR's ratings. It's light and compact, and I can roll it around like a suitcase. Plus, it's simple to use; you just plug it in and spray. My sidewalk and deck have never looked better.

68

PRESSURE WASHER
DeWalt DWPW2100 $300

WORSE BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR GREEN CHOICE

THE BETTER DEAL

Large Gas Grills

HIGHER PRICE
$1,600

73 ✓ Weber Genesis S-435

BETTER PRICE
$750

82 ✓ Monument Grills 77352

THE LOWDOWN:
The sturdy Weber has a roomy cooking surface and a side burner. It excels in cooking evenness and is very good at indirect cooking. The bargain Monument has a slightly smaller cooking surface and no side burner, but preheating is faster and it has a broader range of temperatures for cooking.

PHOTOS: SARAH ANNE WARD; PROP STYLING: ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS (FIREPIT); CONSUMER REPORTS (13); MANUFACTURERS (2)

We Love ... Easy Outdoor Maintenance

String Trimmers

92

TOPS FOR SERIOUS TRIMMING

✓ **Makita XRU15PT Battery String Trimmer** $450

The Makita XRU15PT is the single best battery trimmer we've tested. It draws power from a pair of 18-volt batteries that can also be used with other Makita tools, including cordless drills and saws.

91

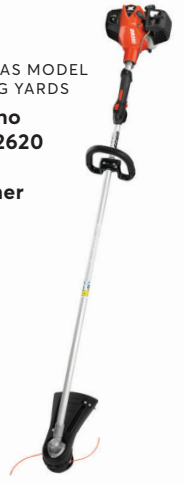
BUDGET BATTERY MODEL

✓ **Ego ST1502SA Battery String Trimmer** $200

86

BEST GAS MODEL FOR BIG YARDS

✓ **Echo SRM-2620 String Trimmer** $360



Battery Leaf Blowers

89

IMPRESSIVE BLOWING POWER

✓ **Ego LB7654 Leaf Blower** $300

The top-rated battery blower from Ego makes quick work of sweeping and loosening leaves, and boasts a battery that works with its other highly rated lawn tools.

83

NICE PRICE

✓ **Stihl BGA 57** $200

85

GREAT RELIABILITY

✓ **Makita GBU01M1 Leaf Blower** $390

Battery Lawn Mowers

85

EXCELLENT MOWING AND A LONG RUN TIME

✓ **Greenworks MO80L421** $750

This best-in-class Greenworks self-propelled mower excels at mulching, cutting evenness, and handling. It can run for 75 minutes on its two batteries, enough to mow one-third of an acre.

78

VALUE-PRICED BATTERY PICK

✓ **Ego LM2114SP** $550

79

TOP-PERFORMING PUSH MOWER

✓ **Ryobi RY401200** $600

We Love ... Great Gadgets

TVs

87 EXCEPTIONAL 65-INCH MODEL

✓ **LG OLED65G3PUA** $3,300

This top-rated LG 4K smart TV really has no weaknesses. The picture quality is excellent and it's among the brightest OLED TVs we've tested, with vibrant, colorful images. Sound is above average, too.

74 IMPRESSIVE 43-INCH OPTION

✓ **Samsung QN43QN90C** $1,200

65 BUDGET 65-INCH PICK

Roku 65R6A5R $600

Smartwatches

90 WINNING WATCH

✓ **Apple Watch Ultra GPS + Cellular (49mm)** $795

The Apple Watch Ultra is built with durability in mind, with a rugged titanium case and an extra-long battery life. And the big, bright display makes it easy to read on the go.

87 ANDROID-COMPATIBLE CHOICE

✓ **Google Pixel Watch LTE** $400

87 GREAT FEATURES FOR LESS

✓ **Samsung Galaxy Watch5 LTE (40mm)** $330

Smartphones

86 MOST ADVANCED FUNCTIONS

✓ **Apple iPhone 14 Pro Max** $1,100

The iPhone 14 Pro has better cameras than previous versions, an always-on display, and an impressive 40-hour battery life. (We hadn't tested the iPhone 15 at press time.)

85 BEST ANDROID PHONE

✓ **Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra** $1,200

76 BARGAIN BUY

Samsung Galaxy A54 5G $450

THE BETTER DEAL

Wireless Earbuds

HIGHER PRICE $300

77 ✓ **Bose QuietComfort Earbuds II**

BETTER PRICE $180

77 ✓ **Sennheiser CX Plus**

PHOTOS: SARAH ANNE WARD; PROP STYLING: ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS (SECURITY CAMERA). CONSUMER REPORTS (14); MANUFACTURERS (1)

WORSE — BETTER | ✓ CR RECOMMENDED | $ CR SMART BUY

New & Cool

Angela Lashbrook
Writer, Audience Expansion

I OWN THIS!

86

PRODUCT CATEGORY

iPad Mini $460

The iPad mini is a terrific tablet for browsing the internet and watching movies, but I especially love it as a reading and note-taking tool when paired with the Apple Pencil (sold separately).

THE LOWDOWN: The Bose Quiet Comfort Earbuds II provide impressive noise cancellation for instant quiet when you need it—and very satisfying sound. But you can get nearly the same performance for a much lower price with the Sennheiser CX Plus earbuds. They're also tops for both noise canceling and sound quality.

79

Google Nest Cam With Floodlight (Wired) $280

Security Camera

Google's first floodlight camera is the best we've tested, thanks in part to its bright, 2400-lumen lights. It can record 3 hours of video free (or you can pay for storage to record more) and detects people, vehicles, and animals. And there's no monthly subscription fee.

Garage Door Opener

This smart controller lets you remotely operate and monitor your garage door from your phone. It also connects to Amazon and Walmart systems, so packages you've ordered can be left inside your garage, safe from porch pirates.

Chamberlain myQ-G0401-ES Smart Garage Control $30

Smarter Speaker

It does everything you'd expect: It plays music, responds to questions (like "What's the weather?"), controls your smart devices on command, and more. Plus, when paired with an Eero router it works as a WiFi network extender, a neat trick for a relatively inexpensive gadget.

65

Amazon Echo (4th Gen) Smart Speaker $100

TOP PICKS | Under $35,000

82

SMALL CAR

Toyota Corolla Hybrid

$23,300 - $28,140

The Corolla Hybrid embodies practicality, with its low sticker price, good predicted reliability, and outstanding fuel economy at 48 mpg overall. In our highway test, this budget sedan recorded an impressive 59 mpg. Plus, Corollas come with key safety features, more than many models that cost twice as much.

77

SUBCOMPACT SUV

Toyota Corolla Cross

$23,610 - $31,065

87

SMALL SUV

Subaru Forester

$26,395 - $36,795

80

SMALL TRUCK

Ford Maverick Hybrid

$24,900 - $34,135

90

MIDSIZED SEDAN

Toyota Camry Hybrid

$28,855 - $34,295

70

ELECTRIC CAR

Nissan Leaf

$28,140 - $36,190

The Leaf provides a low-priced entry into the realm of electric cars. Its small size and comfortable ride make it well suited for urban commuters. Go with the SV Plus for its 60-kWh battery and 200+ miles of range.

PHOTOS: CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURERS. PHOTOS, FOLLOWING SPREAD: SARAH ANNE WARD; PROP STYLING: ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS (E-BIKE). CONSUMER REPORTS (5); MANUFACTURERS (1)

TOP PICKS | Over $35,000

88

MIDSIZED 2-ROW SUV

Hyundai Santa Fe Hybrid

$36,210 - $41,870

87

MIDSIZED 3-ROW SUV

Kia Telluride

$35,990 - $53,185

A perennial Top Pick since its 2020 introduction, the Telluride continues to set the benchmark for midsized 3-row SUVs. Among its many virtues are a practical, boxy shape and a powerful engine backed by a smooth transmission. CR members give it high marks for satisfaction as well.

78

ELECTRIC CAR

Tesla Model 3

$40,240 - $53,240

87

LUXURY SUV

Lexus NX350h

$43,055 - $59,505

THE BETTER DEAL

Midsized 2-Row SUVs

HIGHER PRICE

$48,600 - $68,730

81 **Lexus RX**

BETTER PRICE

$34,620 - $42,765

80 **Toyota Venza**

THE LOWDOWN:
The latest RX isn't as refined as previous model years. Meanwhile, the less expensive Venza shines for being a bit more upscale than the typical Toyota. It's a touch narrower than the RX but offers similar functionality, and it's quite efficient with 37 mpg overall.

New & Cool

82

Blix Sol Eclipse
$1,500

E-Bike

Styled like a classic cruiser bicycle, the Sol Eclipse has a cushy seat and wide-grip handlebars for a relaxed riding position. Among the tested e-bikes, this one shines for its reasonable price and being fun to ride.

We Love ... Top-Performing Equipment

Car Batteries

91
GROUP 65
Super Start Platinum AGM 65PLT
$185

86
GROUP 24/24F
Interstate Mega-Tron Plus MTP-24
$125

90
GROUP 35
Super Start Platinum 35PLT
$185

86
GROUP 48
Interstate MTX-48/H6
$185

81
GROUP 51R
Duracell 51R
$105

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED

Grizzl-E Classic $320

Home EV Charger

The Grizzl-E Classic is a basic, rugged 240-volt electric car charger that's less expensive than many comparable models. It can be installed on a 40 ampere circuit. There are WiFi-connected versions that you can control through a smartphone app for a little more money. But most owners may find the car's app is all they need to monitor charging.

Nextbase 622GW 4K Dash Cam $400

Dash Camera

The Nextbase 622GW has high resolution, image stabilization, and effective night vision. But what sets it apart are its extra features, like a polarizer to limit reflections, its slo-mo mode, and cloud-based file storage.

Michael Pasacrita
Associate Director, Web Development

I OWN THIS!

80

COMPACT SUV

✔ **2023 Kia Sportage Hybrid** $27,490 - $43,190

While trying out the Sportage Hybrid at CR's Auto Test Center, I was so impressed by the smooth ride and tech features, like the responsive touchscreen and effective lane-centering assistance, that I ended up buying one. I love the peppy powertrain, roomy cargo space, and styling, too. Plus, my three kids appreciate the spacious and comfortable rear seats.

Tires

67

ALL-SEASON

✔ **Continental PureContact LS** $142

69

ALL-SEASON SUV

✔ **Vredestein HiTrac** $169

73

WINTER/SNOW

✔ **Bridgestone Blizzak WS90** $131

75

WINTER/SNOW, TRUCK

✔ **Nokian Hakkapeliitta R5 SUV** $246

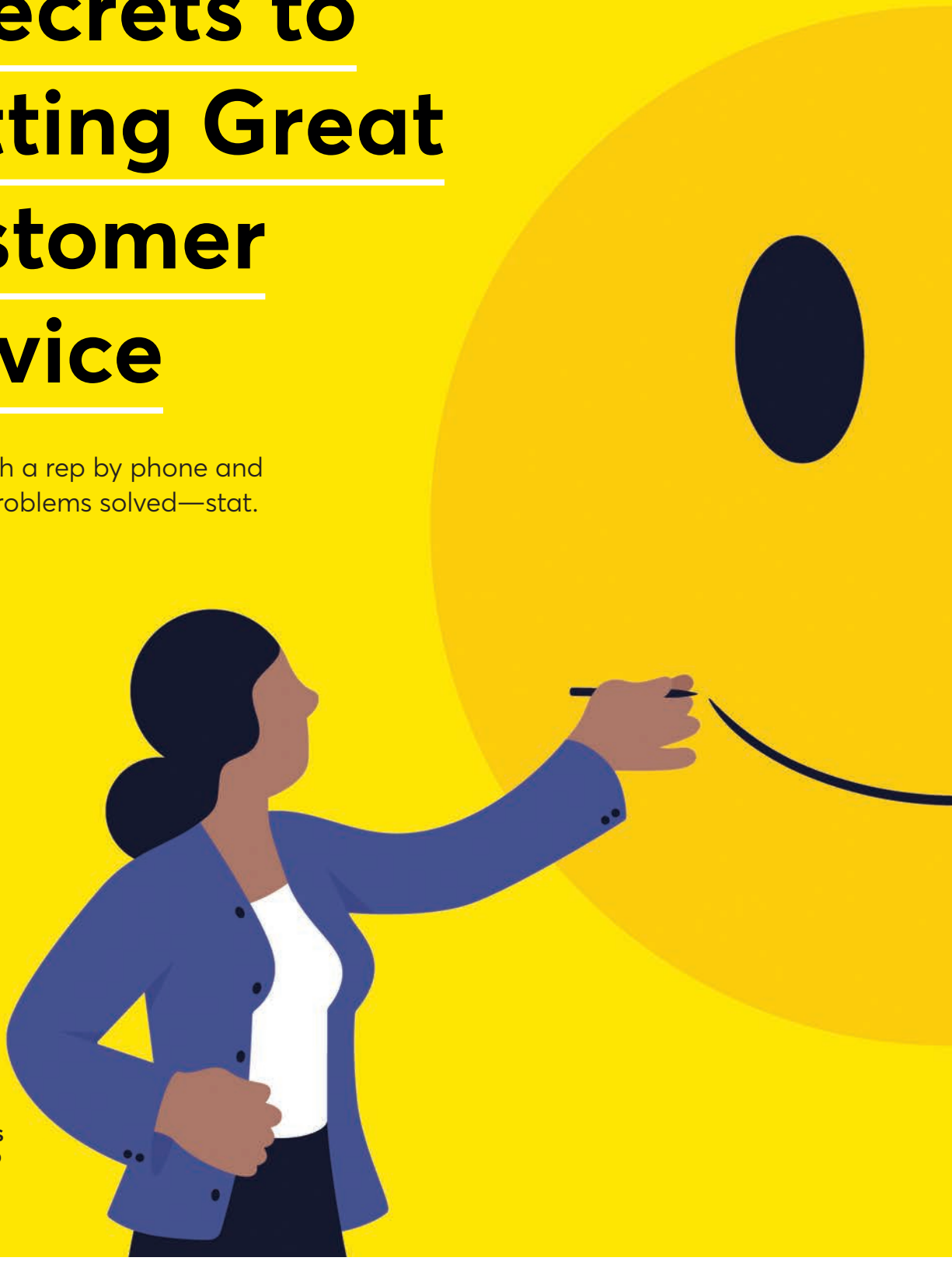
74

WINTER/SNOW, PERFORMANCE

✔ **Vredestein Wintrac Pro** $180

9 Secrets to Getting Great Customer Service

How to reach a rep by phone and have your problems solved—stat.



BY BETH BRAVERMAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANCESCO CICCOLELLA

AFTER ASKING his satellite company to change his TV service from wired to wireless, Scott M. Broetzmann spent months trying to get the job done. First, technicians failed to show up for scheduled appointments. Then, when one finally did, the work wasn't done correctly and caused even more problems. Broetzmann eventually decided to take his business elsewhere but had to spend more time getting a refund for services he'd already paid for. He estimates that the whole ordeal took more than 20 hours—and that's not counting all the time he spent getting up to change TV channels because his remote wouldn't work.

"It was the most horrific customer care experience I've ever endured," says Broetzmann, who as president and CEO of Customer Care Measurement and Consulting in Alexandria, Va., knows a thing or two about how it's supposed to work. "In fact, the money involved was negligible. For me, it was more a matter of principle."

Chances are, Broetzmann's experience sounds familiar. More than 60 percent of people report

feeling really angry when they run into a problem with a product or service, and about two-thirds aren't satisfied with the action that companies take to resolve their issues, according to the 2023 National Consumer Rage Survey, which Broetzmann's company conducts every few years.

Blame automated call systems, hard-to-navigate automated phone trees, understaffed call centers, and FAQs that don't answer our Qs. It often feels as if companies are less generous and less concerned than ever about making their customers happy.

It's not surprising, then, that consumers have become increasingly ticked off about their problems—and are showing it. More than 40 percent of people in the Consumer Rage survey said they yelled at or raised their voice to a customer service rep, while only 35 percent admitted doing so in 2015.

If your last interaction with a customer service department left you wishing that you still had a phone you could slam down in frustration, take a deep breath. There are a few new tricks to getting what you want from a service rep with less stress, and they involve knowing the best ways to reach out (chatbot? email? phone call?) and then what to say once you connect with one.

1 Check service ratings before you buy

The first and best way to reduce your chances of having a poor customer experience? Whenever possible, get products and/or services from companies that have a reputation for taking good care of their clients.

Shep Hyken, a customer service expert and consultant in St. Louis who has written several books on the subject, does an annual survey that asks consumers which companies deliver the most satisfying customer service experiences. For 2023, his survey

Getting Service Reps to Listen

For the best results when dealing with customer service, you want to get the rep to see your point of view.

"The approach should be that the representative is your partner in crime, and you're trying to collaborate with that person," says Andres Lares, managing partner at the Shapiro Negotiations Institute in Baltimore. "You're not negotiating against them, you're negotiating with them."

At right are phrases he suggests you use.

"Have you ever been able to help another customer who had the same problem? Can you tell me more about that and what you were able to do?"

This phrasing gives the customer service representative a chance to consider a solution that may have worked for other customers in the past. Their answer might prompt you to share additional details about your situation that could be relevant or inspire new and more favorable ideas for a resolution.

found that the top six are Amazon, Walmart, Target, Apple, Chick-fil-A, and Costco.

Consumer Reports also includes customer service experiences in the overall satisfaction ratings for things like appliance, mattress, luggage, and eyeglass retailers, as well as for tire stores, insurers, and cell phone service and telecom providers. So be sure to check our ratings for those products and services when you're deciding whom to give your business to.

Looking for intel on a provider in a different category or for a local shop? Do a quick search on social media. Nearly a third of all complainants in the Consumer Rage survey posted about their most serious problems on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), or elsewhere. Most companies get at least one or two complaints from customers, but if you see many of them or detect a pattern of dissatisfaction, those could be red flags—and a good reason to make your purchase elsewhere. Also, pay attention to the dates of reviews because a company's approach to customer service may change over time, so older reviews may have less relevance.

2 Try self-help

Depending on your problem, you may not have to contact customer service at all. The websites of many companies have information about their policies for returns, exchanges, and refunds, with instructions on how to start the process. More complicated questions can sometimes be resolved by using Google or YouTube. For example, if you're having internet troubles, before getting into the cable provider's phone queue, try typing "my internet connection is slow" into the search bar. You might find articles and videos that you can follow to troubleshoot and potentially solve the problem.

3 Use a chatbot

The next easiest and fastest solution is using the chat feature if the company has one on its website. (If it does, you'll probably see a pop-up alerting you to it.) Again, this is often best for simple problems and common questions, because you're usually going to be talking to a robot programmed to help solve a limited number of issues. But a shortcoming of chatbots, according to DigitalGenius, a company that designs products that provide customer service using artificial intelligence, is that many of them can't take action for you. They can, however, get you answers to questions they're programmed to answer with almost no wait time, and sometimes patch you through to a human agent.

4 Make a phone call to get a rep

One of the top customer service complaints in the Consumer Rage survey was about how some companies deliberately make it difficult for consumers to figure out how to contact them. And when you do find a number, you may be forced to navigate an aggravating phone tree system to get to the department you want. Save yourself some trouble by typing the company's name into the search box at GetHuman.com, which offers customer service phone numbers for more than a thousand companies (and whether they have callback systems), along with phone tree hacks. Typing "[company name] customer service" into Google can also help you get the right number.

"Put yourself in my shoes."

Seeking a connection creates empathy, helping the customer service rep understand where you're coming from.

When the host of a rental home that Lares had reserved for his family canceled the booking a day before the vacation, the rental company's service rep told Lares to rebook elsewhere. But the options were more expensive and less desirable.

To connect with the agent, Lares asked her if she had children and how she would explain the step down in vacation rental to them if she were in his position. That changed the tenor of the conversation, Lares says, to "Okay, we can try everything for your family."

Ultimately, they found an acceptable house and got a 20 percent refund worth hundreds of dollars.

"I really appreciate that you're trying your best, but the solutions you've outlined so far don't work for me. I'd like to talk to a supervisor, please."

This acknowledges the effort and work the customer service representative already did without belittling them personally. That way, they're more likely to quickly escalate your request—and to potentially do so on a positive note rather than putting you on hold while they brief their manager about what a difficult customer you are.

Another fast way to reach a rep: "In most cases, if you keep saying 'representative' or pressing '0' long enough, you'll probably finally get a human being," because that can bypass the automated system, says Edgar Dworsky, a former assistant attorney general in Massachusetts who now runs ConsumerWorld.org, an online consumer resource guide.

If you can, avoid making customer service calls on Monday morning. That's when everyone who's been stewing over an issue all weekend calls in, jamming phone lines and overwhelming representatives. Call centers tend to be easier to get through to on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons, says Brad Cleveland, author of "Leading the Customer Experience: How to Chart a Course and Deliver Outstanding Results."

The effort may be worth it. According to a Consumer Reports nationally representative survey in August of 2,062 U.S. adults, about half said that talking to a person worked better in all customer service situations than using automated systems like chatbots.

5 State your case, calmly

When you get someone on the phone, remember that "being huffy and argumentative and demanding is a mistake," Dworsky says. "These people are human beings, and when you're yelling, they're not going to be predisposed to give you anything you want."

Instead, clearly outline your problem in a calm and friendly way, and let the service rep know how you'd like to resolve it. "Be persistent about stating what you want," Broetzmann says. If you're looking for a free replacement part, waived fees, or a partial or full refund, directly ask for it. And repeating the request over and over can help the service rep get on the same page as you.

Cleveland agrees. "Listen to the customer service representative's solution, as they often have guidelines they must follow," he says. But if their initial offer doesn't strike you as fair or good enough, continue to push and try to negotiate a more satisfactory solution, he advises.

6 Speak to someone else

If you strongly believe that you deserve what you're asking for and that the customer service rep isn't being helpful enough, "thank the person, hang up, and call back," Hyken says. "A different agent might see things differently. I'm amazed at how often I call a company and talk to two or more people, getting a different answer each time."

You can also ask to speak to a supervisor. That person may have more leeway to help you.

7 Consider raising the stakes

Your next steps depend on the kind of company you're dealing with. If you're complaining to a neighborhood store or small business, such as a home or auto repair shop that has a local reputation to protect, making a gentle threat, such as saying you're going to complain to the Better Business Bureau or post about your ordeal on social media or simply tell all your friends about it, will probably carry some weight, Broetzmann says. Bigger companies may not be as sensitive to these kinds of ultimatums. But if you have an ongoing relationship with the company, as you likely do, say, with your cable or cell phone provider, ask to speak to someone in what's called the "customer retention" department. "That person is incentivized to try to have you not leave in a huff," Broetzmann says, so you might have more success.

8 Complain publicly

If all of your efforts have still netted you nothing, sometimes going on a social media channel to broadcast your complaint can be effective. (Just be sure to use the @ symbol before the company name.) Doing this is better than writing a letter to the CEO of the company, Broetzman says, because at many companies the resources once allocated to reading paper correspondence are now put into social-media monitoring duty. Some companies may be inclined to respond to public criticism if they think their reputation is on the line. Be brief and to the point. You can say something like: "XYZ Company promised next-day delivery, then delayed my package for a week! Now refusing to refund overnight shipping cost. Won't shop there again!" You might find a response from the company asking you to direct message it some info so it can solve the problem.

9 Take the post-service survey

Not only will this provide feedback for the company to potentially improve their customer service policies in the future, it may also result in an additional response from the company.

That was the case for Dworsky when he filled out a survey from a home maintenance company in which he let it know that he thought the tech did only a superficial job on an HVAC tuneup.

After receiving his response, the company called Dworsky to ask if he wanted a senior tech to come out to do a more thorough inspection.

"Sometimes filling out an evaluation can lead to a company wanting to make a poor experience right," he says.

PHOTO: SCOTT MEADOWS/CONSUMER REPORTS

A CR Secret Shopper's Advice for Better Service

Consumer Reports employs three full-time "secret shoppers" including John (not his real name, of course), who buys most of the products we test, including appliances, tech products, and mattresses. John has been shopping for CR for 30 years. He regularly deals with service reps when there are delivery problems or when products arrive with broken or missing parts. Here are his top tips for getting the best customer service:

DO

Get prepped

Before you contact customer service, gather the necessary paperwork. You'll probably need your order number, account number, the date the transaction took place, and perhaps the warranty. In the case of appliances, you'll also need the serial number.

DON'T

Show up at a store right before closing needing help

You'll typically get the best in-person customer service if you arrive just after the store opens. "I will only go to Walmart before 10 a.m. if I need help with something," John says. "Later in the day, it's just a zoo."

DON'T

Throw out the packaging

Some stores won't take items back unless you have all of the original packaging materials. So keep them on hand for as long as possible.

DO

Start the return process immediately for large appliances and electronics

For some large appliances and electronics, you need to contact the company within 48 hours or they won't take the item back. That's the policy at Lowe's, for example, for major appliances like refrigerators, ranges, and washing machines.

DO

Go to stores where you know you'll get great customer service

John routinely drives to a Best Buy that's in another town because it has better customer service than the one closer to him.

DO

Shop local when possible

Smaller shops often have better customer service than national chains, John says. That's because the owners may have more flexibility to bend the return policy or make other arrangements to help. John especially prefers small stores for large appliances because he can go back to them and speak to a person instead of getting stuck in a phone loop.

DO

Use the Amazon chatbots

For most problems with Amazon orders, you can get a fast fix through the online portal without ever speaking to a person. "Often they'll tell you to keep the items and refund you or send you a new one," John says.

The Safer Way to Drink

One minute, there are studies that say alcohol is good for you—then others say it's bad. What's the truth? We've got it here, along with the best (and yes, healthier) ways to drink wine, beer, and cocktails.

BY JENNIFER COOK PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARAH ANNE WARD

'Tis the season to lift a glass. Whether it's a Beaujolais with the Thanksgiving turkey, eggnog at a holiday party, or a flute of bubbly for a New Year's toast, enjoying an alcoholic drink is an important part of the festive season for many of us. And for the rest of the year? Studies going back decades have suggested that a nightly glass of red wine or another alcoholic beverage is healthy and contributes to a longer life. Was that right? Not exactly.

New research has put a damper on some of the fun, reconsidering those alleged benefits and highlighting some risks. Most notably, a widely reported review published last spring in the journal JAMA Open Network, which looked at the health and drinking habits of almost 5 million people, concluded that imbibing small amounts of alcohol does not lengthen your life.

And in January, the World Health Organization declared that "when it comes to alcohol consumption, there is no safe amount that does not affect health."

Why, after years of saying a drink a day is good for you, are experts now saying (sort of) the opposite?

We're going to explain all that below, but here's some reassurance: While even moderate drinkers may benefit from cutting back, if you've been following the current guidelines—no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two for men—your risk of adverse health effects may be small, depending on your health situation.

Most important: If you want to drink less alcohol, we have some smart strategies that will help you cut back. And to help make that effort more pleasurable, we have a look at the burgeoning "de-alcoholized wines" trend, along with tests of some tasty no-alcohol bubblies to enjoy during the holidays—or any time.

The New Mantra: Less Is More

We've long been told that a little bit of alcohol is beneficial, perhaps because of the antioxidants in red wine or the B vitamins in beer. Not surprisingly, about half of Americans got the memo, believing that a drink or two a day is good for our health, or at least not harmful, according to a nationally representative Consumer Reports survey of 2,062 adults conducted in August 2023.

But alcohol researchers and public health experts say those perceptions should change, says Tim Naimi, MD, director of the University of Victoria's Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research in British Columbia, and an author of the recent JAMA Open Network study.

The latest thinking, he says, is that when it comes to alcohol, "less is more."

That's because Naimi and other researchers have pinpointed problems with the way much of the previous research was conducted.

Specifically, many of the studies that suggested a possible health benefit from alcohol compared moderate drinkers with people who abstained completely. But researchers now say those findings were biased because most–about 80 percent–of the studies looked at in the JAMA Open Network analysis didn't consider why abstainers didn't drink alcohol or when they stopped drinking.

In fact many people gave up alcohol precisely because they developed health problems; researchers call them "sick quitters."

In the JAMA Open Network analysis, once the researchers compared only lifetime nondrinkers with the moderate drinkers, it became clear that there was no health benefit to consuming any amount of alcohol.

Actually, the risk of dying prematurely was 21 percent greater for women who had just under two drinks a day, and 15 percent greater for men who had around three drinks a day.

Tim Stockwell, PhD–a professor in the department of psychology at the University of Victoria who was also involved in the JAMA Open Network study–says other research now suggests that "the risk of mortality increases the moment you start drinking."

Or, to look at it another way: On average, people who have one drink a day lose about 5 minutes a day–or a total of about three months over a lifetime, Stockwell says.

PROP STYLING BY ED GALLAGHER/BIG LEO PRODUCTIONS. PHOTOS, THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY IMAGES; ADOBE STOCK; KEITH HOMAN/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

What Experts Mean by 'One Drink'

WHEN YOU MAKE A COCKTAIL or grab a bottle of beer, are you having just one drink? Maybe not. Researchers typically define "one standard drink" as a beverage that contains about ½ ounce (1.2 tablespoons) of pure alcohol. But depending on the strength of the booze—measured by the percentage of alcohol by volume, or ABV—as well as how much you pour, what you'd consider one drink could actually be one-and-a-half or even two drinks.

Here's what counts as one drink of various types of alcohol, based on ABV and the size of the drink. If the ABV or amount you serve yourself is higher than what's listed here, you're consuming more than one drink.

WINE

5 ounces
about 12 percent ABV

Check the ABV on bottles. It can vary.

BEER

12 ounces
about 5 percent ABV

A draft beer could be more than one drink, depending on glass size.

GIN & TONIC

1.5 ounces of gin
about 40 percent ABV

A shot of a spirit such as gin or whiskey, straight up or in a cocktail, is one drink. However, some cocktails contain multiple types of spirits or liquors. For example, one Negroni, made with 1¼ ounces each of gin, vermouth, and Campari, would count as two drinks based on the ABV of each type of alcohol.

HARD SELTZER

12 ounces
about 5 percent ABV

Note: Canned cocktails can have much higher ABVs.

SHERRY, PORT, VERMOUTH

3 to 4 ounces
about 17 percent ABV

Fortified wines like these are made with brandy or another spirit.

The Trouble With Alcohol

Other research shows that even in moderate amounts, alcohol increases the risk of several chronic diseases, including heart disease, some cancers, and possibly dementia.

For example, a 2023 analysis of studies in the journal Hypertension linked drinking any amount of alcohol to rising blood pressure levels over a five-year period, even in people who had normal blood pressure.

That added weight to an earlier analysis in the Lancet, which looked at data from 83 studies and found that people who drank more than five to six glasses of wine or pints of beer per week had an increased risk of stroke, heart disease, heart failure, and other forms of cardiovascular disease.

The growing concerns prompted the World Heart Federation to issue a report that stated that "the belief

How Drinking Affects Women

➜ **WOMEN, ON AVERAGE,** still drink less than men (though they are catching up). But they are more sensitive to alcohol's harmful effects, even if they weigh the same. For example, women become dependent on alcohol more quickly than men do, research shows, and develop other health-related problems sooner as well. Here's why.

More of the alcohol women drink gets into their bloodstream and tissue. That happens in part because women have less of an enzyme called alcohol dehydrogenase, which breaks down alcohol in the stomach. And women tend to have less water overall in their bodies than men do—both in their blood and in their tissue—so the alcohol doesn't get as diluted. As a result, more of the alcohol they drink ends up reaching—and potentially damaging—their organs.

Blood alcohol levels rise faster in women and stay elevated longer too. Because more of the alcohol women consume ends up in their blood, they can get intoxicated faster, and stay tipsy longer than men.

Estrogen has an effect. Alcohol raises estrogen levels in women, and high amounts of that hormone have been linked to breast cancer and certain other malignancies as well.

that alcohol is good for cardiovascular health is no longer acceptable."

As for cancer, research shows that the body breaks down alcohol into a chemical called acetaldehyde, which damages DNA, says Marissa Esser, PhD, head of the Alcohol Program in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That chemical also "prevents your body from repairing the damage, and the cells then can begin growing out of control and creating a cancerous tumor," she says.

It might not take much alcohol to increase the odds of developing cancer. Low amounts of alcohol—as little as one drink a day—have been linked to oral, pharyngeal, esophageal, and female breast cancers.

For example, research suggests that light to moderate drinking raises breast cancer risk by 5 to 10 percent. And according to a report from the World Health Organization, about 6 percent of all of breast cancer cases diagnosed in the U.S. in 2020 were linked to alcohol.

The research on dementia and alcohol consumption is less clear-cut but still concerning. The connection is very obvious among heavy drinkers. A 2018 French study found more than a 300 percent increased risk of dementia among men and women with alcohol use disorders. Other research has detected changes in the structures of the brain that are associated with dementia in heavy consumers of alcohol.

While the research among moderate drinkers is more uncertain—with some evidence showing no or only small increased risks, and possibly even some benefits—Stockwell at the University of Victoria says caution is still warranted. "Ethanol in the bloodstream, and its metabolite acetaldehyde, damage human tissue," he says, "and the brain is not protected from those effects."

Alcohol, even in moderate amounts, increases the risk of several chronic diseases, including heart disease, some cancers, and possibly even dementia.

Assessing Your Risk

When it comes to activities that people enjoy, like drinking alcohol, "people are prepared to take more risks," Stockwell says. And the University of Victoria's Naimi adds that he doesn't "just say everyone should get down to two drinks a week, because we know that's not practical or possible."

It's pretty clear from the evidence that "if you think you're drinking for your health, you're probably misguided," Stockwell says. But if you're not interested in becoming a teetotaler, here are a few things to consider when deciding how much alcohol is okay for you.

YOUR AGE

Our body's ability to tolerate alcohol decreases as we age. That is partly because lean body tissue (such as muscles and organs) absorbs alcohol and fat does not—and the amount of fat rises with age, while the amount of lean tissue decreases.

As a result, it takes less alcohol to affect our coordination, thinking, and behavior as we get older, making accidents more common. For example, alcohol can alter an older person's sense of balance, leading to falls and fractures—or worse: Drinking is a factor in 65 percent of fatal falls.

YOUR GENDER

Women may want to be more conservative drinkers than men because they are more prone to the immediate and long-term harmful effects of alcohol. (See "How Drinking Affects Women," on the facing page.)

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY, MEDICAL CONDITIONS, AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

If alcohol abuse, heart disease, or cancer runs in your family, you may want to be extra cautious with how much you drink.

And if you already have high blood pressure, diabetes, or another chronic illness, drinking could make it more difficult to manage your condition and may interact with over-the-counter drugs you take or medications you've been prescribed.

Taking aspirin and drinking, for example, can increase the risk of stomach or intestinal bleeding,

and high doses of acetaminophen (Tylenol) with alcohol can cause liver damage. Combining alcohol with cold or allergy medications that contain antihistamines can make you very sleepy, and medicines that have a high alcohol content, such as some laxatives and cough syrups, can add to alcohol's effects. And using alcohol while you're on certain sleeping pills, pain pills, or medicines for anxiety or depression can be dangerous.

So check with your pharmacist or physician to see whether a particular condition or drug makes alcohol off-limits.

HOW YOU DRINK

Lots of people–about a third, according to CR's recent survey–think there is no difference, healthwise, between having three drinks in one day and having one drink on three different days. But the more alcohol the body has to process at one time, the greater the effect on the liver, heart, and other organs.

"For any amount of alcohol, it's better to spread it out," Naimi says.

So if Sunday through Thursday are dry days for you, it's not okay to have four drinks on Friday and six on Saturday. In fact, that describes binge drinking, a type of excessive drinking that's not just for college kids anymore: It's on the rise among older adults and women, statistics show.

WHY YOU DRINK

If you tend to drink out of habit, because others around you do or because a party or dinner doesn't seem special without alcohol, ask yourself why you feel that way. Becoming more aware of the role alcohol plays in your life can help you make a more conscious decision about when to drink. And that way, when you do, you might find that you consume less but enjoy it more.

How to Drink in a He

Many of us underestimate how much we drink, according to self-reported surveys of risky drinking. That makes it even more important to pay attention to these tips for cutting back on alcohol without going cold turkey.

DRINK FEWER DAYS A WEEK

If you currently have a drink every day of the week, pick one—or more—days when you don't. And even if you drink only two or three times a week, consider adding another day to your nonalcohol days.

HAVE ONE INSTEAD OF TWO

On the days you do drink, have a single beer, cocktail, or glass of wine, not two.

OPT FOR BEVERAGES WITH LOWER AMOUNTS OF ALCOHOL

The alcohol by volume (ABV) can vary widely not just among beer, wine, and spirits but also among alcoholic beverages in the same category. For example, an India pale ale (IPA) beer may have 4.5 percent ABV—or 9 percent. Sweet wines such as Moscato D'Asti tend to have a lower ABV (around 5 percent) than, say, a California chardonnay (around 14 percent). And even among wines of the same type, alcohol levels can vary—one brand of Vinho Verde might have 9 percent ABV; another, 12.5 percent. Gin, vodka, whiskey, and other hard liquors have much higher ABVs—usually about 40 percent.

WHAT 5 OUNCES OF WINE REALLY LOOKS LIKE

A 2017 study in the journal BMJ found that the larger the wine glass, the more people poured. Because glass sizes vary so much, a serving (5 ounces) will look very different in different kinds of glasses, as shown here.

althier Way

The alcohol level in hard liquor is measured by proof, which is twice the ABV. An 80 proof vodka, for instance, has 40 percent ABV, and a 100 proof one has a 50 percent ABV.

EAT BEFORE AND WHILE IMBIBING

Having food in your stomach slows how quickly alcohol gets into your bloodstream. The main effect here is keeping your blood alcohol level low enough so you don't get intoxicated—but it doesn't do anything to combat alcohol's other health effects.

Another benefit of eating while you drink: You are likely to drink more slowly. And that, of course, also helps slow the rate at which alcohol gets into your bloodstream.

ALTERNATE ALCOHOLIC AND ALCOHOL-FREE DRINKS

If you tend to toss back a few more than you should when you're socializing, try alternating your choice of alcohol with seltzer, soda, or a nonalcoholic beer, wine, or cocktail, says Katie Witkiewitz, PhD, director of the Center on Alcohol, Substance Use And Addictions at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. This may also help you reduce your risk of having a hangover, not only because you drink less overall but also because those other hydrating drinks can counterbalance the dehydrating effect of alcohol.

POUR SMALLER SERVINGS

You could use less gin in your gin and tonic, or order a glass of beer instead of a pint. Eyeballing your pour can be challenging; use a measuring cup or shot glass to get it right.

SET A CASH LIMIT

Giving yourself a budget for a night out can reduce your drinking and help you save money. So when you head to a bar or restaurant, decide at the outset that you aren't going to spend more than the price of your favorite drink. And before you go to the liquor store to stock up, have a dollar limit in mind and stick to it.

TRACK YOUR INTAKE

"We actually know that just engaging in the process of monitoring helps people reduce their drinking—just like dietary tracking of food helps people eat less food," Witkiewitz says. You can use a journal for tracking, but there are also lots of apps that can help you monitor your alcohol intake.

BE AWARE OF HOW YOU FEEL

After you cut back, you might notice that you sleep better, have more energy, or have lost weight. Alcohol is fairly high in calories and also hinders fat burning and may increase appetite.

10 WINES TESTED

The Best Booze-Free Sparkling Wines

➜ It's easier than ever to find a festive drink that doesn't contain alcohol. There are now hundreds of alcohol-free beers, wines, and spirits on store shelves, and it seems like more arrive every week.

How close can these libations come in terms of taste to the alcoholic drinks they're imitating? Pretty darn close, at least in some cases. That's according to a team of CR staffers who recently blind-tasted eight de-alcoholized sparkling wines (which are made with grapes and then fermented like wine, with the alcohol removed at the end) as well as two sparkling wine alternatives (which are blends of ingredients such as tea, herbs, and fruit). Here, our results. —*Trisha Calvo*

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Vinada Tinteling Tempranillo Rosé $15

It's very bubbly, with a pretty pink color and a soft, fruity flavor, with notes of apple and pear. This was a hit with most of our tasters. Many called it refreshing, and sweet but not overly sweet.

33 calories
7.5 g total sugars (**7.5 g** added)

RUNNER-UP

Fre Alcohol-Removed Wine, Sparkling Brut $24

Pleasantly sweet, refreshing, and bubbly about sums up our tasters' take on Fre. It has a "distinct apple/pear taste—which is a plus," one said. Others said it would go well with hors d'oeuvres.

34 calories
7.5 g total sugars (**0 g** added)

BUDGET BUY

Rondel Zero De-Alcoholized Sparkling Wine $11

"This feels like an elevated drink, good for a party; more than just sugar and bubbles," one taster said. Others called it "easy to drink." Most thought it was slightly dry and mildly sweet, with some citrus and herbal flavors.

40 calories
6.6 g total sugars (**6.6 g** added)

SPARKLING RIESLING

Leitz Eins Zwei Zero Sparkling Riesling $21

Rieslings can be supersweet, but this sparkler is dry, with just a little fruit flavor. The haylike and yeasty notes are similar to those in some dry champagnes, Very bubbly.

20 calories
4.5 g total sugars (**4.5 g** added)

CRISP AND DRY

Thomson & Scott Noughty Dealcoholized Sparkling Chardonnay $26

"This feels and looks like a dry champagne," one taster said. Light and effervescent, it had a citrusy flavor.

20 calories
4 g total sugars
(**4 g** added)

PROSECCO-LIKE

Mionetto Alcohol-Removed Premium Sparkling Wine $15

Made by one of the largest producers of real prosecco, tasters liked its plentiful bubbles and slight sweetness. One taster said it would be good to use in a faux Aperol spritz.

15 calories
3 g total sugars
(**3 g** added)

SUPER-FRUITY

Lyre's Impossibly Crafted Non-Alcoholic Sparkling Classico $25

Slightly sweet, with a fruity flavor, this light-colored offering was nicely balanced—although some tasters felt it had a hint of a bubblegum taste.

25 calories
6 g total sugars
(**6 g** added)

GINGERY

Töst Sparkling White Tea, Cranberry & Ginger $8

This drink doesn't seem designed to replicate a prosecco or a Champagne. Instead, it tastes more like a spicy ginger ale or a ginger beer. Tasters were divided on Töst: Some felt it tasted "medicinal," while others called it "aromatic" and "lovely."

28 calories
7 g total sugars
(**7 g** added)

SUPERSWEET

Non Sparkling Zero Alcohol Beverage, Salted Raspberry & Chamomile $30

This had a seriously fruity, "candylike" flavor and a slightly salty aftertaste, which most tasters did not enjoy.

37 calories
7 g total sugars
(**2 g** added)

SOUR AND BITTER

Surely Non-Alc. Sparkling Rosé $27

Most of the tasters gave this wine low marks. It was dry but sharp, sour, and bitter. One taster said it might be better with food.

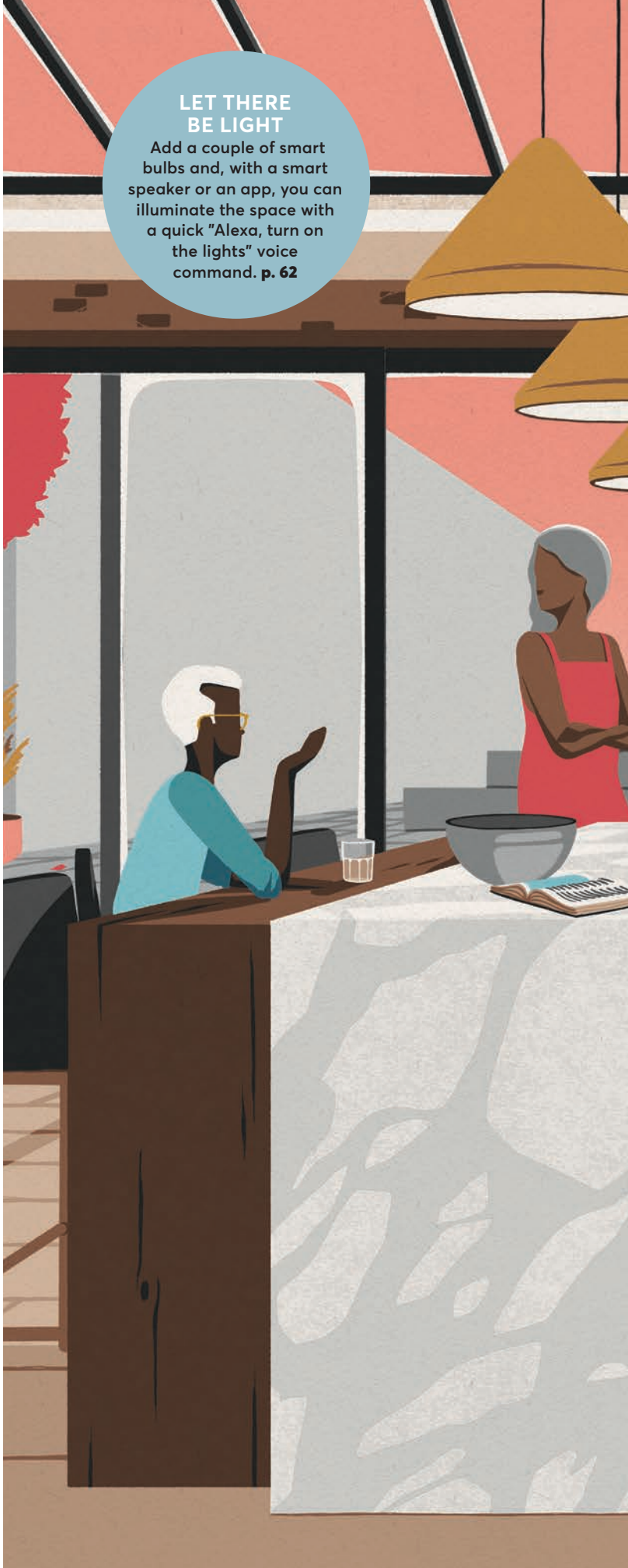
13 calories
<1 g total sugars
(**<1 g** added)

Manufacturers' serving sizes vary. Nutrition information is for 5 ounces.

Quick Fixes for Annoying Kitchen Problems

SIMPLE WAYS TO ENHANCE STORAGE, ORGANIZATION, AND COMFORT—NO REMODEL NEEDED.

by Jennifer Cook
Illustrations by David Doran


LET THERE BE LIGHT
Add a couple of smart bulbs and, with a smart speaker or an app, you can illuminate the space with a quick "Alexa, turn on the lights" voice command. p. 62

Could your kitchen be more enjoyable for you to prep and cook in? Maybe a little more organized, comfortable, bright? Even if you're generally happy with its layout, appliances, and tools, there may be a few aspects that you'd really like to change up. These clever products and smart strategies—which come from Consumer Reports' experts and from outside pros—can make creating meals less complicated, faster, and more of a pleasure. The best part? You can do it all without spending big or bringing in contractors.

DO THIS TO UNCLUTTER COUNTERS
Keep just one or two regularly used items—like a toaster—out. Stash the rest away but close by with smart storage solutions. p. 64
MAKE STANDING LESS TIRING
Replacing floors? Material known as luxury vinyl is easier on your feet and legs than tile—and it's waterproof too. p. 63

1 OPTIMIZE LIGHTING AND FLOORING

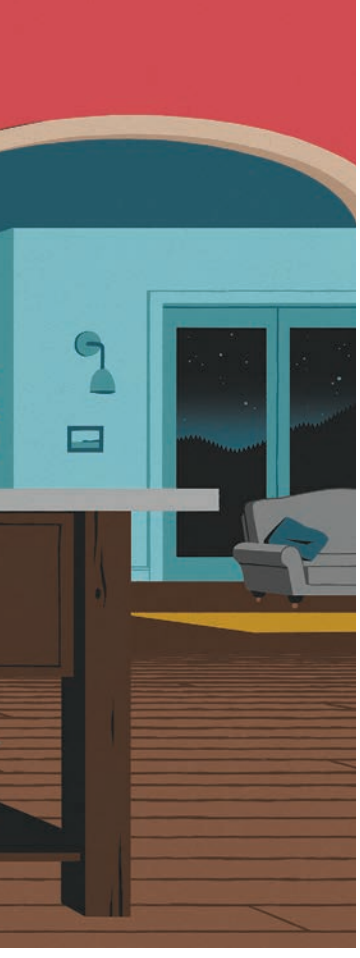
Having a well-lit space and the right surface under your feet are two basics of a well-functioning kitchen—and a safe one too. If your kitchen could benefit from a little assistance in one or both of these areas, check out these ideas.

Brighten It Up

Go for Lightbulbs That Last
You may have already switched to LEDs, but if not, be aware that they last up to 25 times longer than incandescents (making bulb replacement a much less frequent chore). They also use 75 percent less energy and emit far less heat, according to the Department of Energy. LEDs that are about 3,000K (or kelvins, which measure how warm or cool a light is) are suitable for kitchens, with a natural look that is similar to the light from incandescent bulbs, according to Terry McGowan, director of engineering and technology for the American Lighting Association. Tip: Look for Energy Star certified bulbs for maximum efficiency, and check for rebates at energystar.gov/rebate-finder.

Adjust Lighting Hands-Free
You don't have to be a tech wizard to get the advantages of smart lightbulbs, which you can turn on and off simply by speaking out loud to a digital assistant (Amazon Alexa or Apple Home's Siri, among others) or smartphone app. Smart bulbs fit into ordinary lamp sockets and are dimmable, and some allow you to change the "temperature" of lighting from warm to cool. While certain bulbs require a separate WiFi hub to work, the Philips Smart WiFi LED Color and Tunable White A19, $13 (homedepot.com), doesn't—and it's the top pick for easy setup from Daniel Wroclawski, a CR home and appliances writer who covers smart bulbs.

Illuminate Work Areas
Because LEDs emit light in a specific direction, they're ideal for helping you to see well while doing chores like chopping veggies, putting together casserole ingredients, and rolling out dough. A great spot for adding such task lighting is under upper cabinets, to throw light on your counters. You can choose battery-operated, plug-in, or hardwired (the latter requires an electrician). If you don't want the hassle of hardwiring, the bar-shaped Pesuten LED Under Cabinet Task Lighting for Kitchen plug-in, $20 (amazon.com), lets you switch among three different whites. A set of six **Energizer Battery Operated LED Under Cabinet Puck Lights,** pictured on the facing page, comes with a remote control (though you can also turn the lights on or off with a tap) and runs on three AAA batteries. For those who prefer strip lights, the **Lepotec 30-LED Motion Sensor Cabinet Lights,** shown on the facing page, which use rechargeable batteries, can be easily attached to the underside of cabinets or pantry shelves with double-sided adhesive.



No-Effort Mopping
Robotic mops, aka robomops, are somewhat similar to robotic vacuums—both scoot across floors on their own. But robomops use liquid to get floors dirt-free, just as a traditional wet mop would.

82

Samsung's Jetbot Mop (VR20T6001MW)
$299, lowes.com

Light Up Cabinet Contents
A motion sensor light can help you find items stashed in the backs of cabinets and turns on only when you open the cabinet door. One option: Ikea's Stötta LED Cabinet Lighting Strip, $22 (ikea.com), is 28 inches long and runs on four AA batteries (and can take rechargeable batteries). The 18-inch motion-sensing LED peel-and-stick LitezAll Motion Activated LED Tape Light, $20 (litezall.com), offers similar benefits.

See Better at Night
Motion-activated strip lights installed under your base cabinets can provide a glowing pathway when you're grabbing a midnight snack or glass of water, says Wanda Gozdz, a certified aging-in-place specialist. The Honeywell 13.2 Ft Motion Activated Flexible LED Warm White Strip, $19 (homedepot.com), comes on a spool you can cut to your ideal length and has a sticky backing for easy installation. Another option is a night-light like the **SnapPower LED Single MotionLight,** pictured at right, which replaces an existing outlet cover (all it takes is a minute or two) and turns on when anyone moves into range.

Safer, Softer Floors

Use the Right Area Rug
"There's a misconception about scatter or throw rugs," says Scott Trudeau, PhD, productive aging practice manager with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). "It's not always safer to have none." For instance, a nonskid-type rug, placed in front of the sink, can quickly soak up any water spills that might otherwise make your kitchen floor slippery. He recommends rugs that have a carpetlike or woven top and a thick rubber backing to help them adhere firmly to the floor. One option: the Maples Garden Floral Accent Rug, $20 (2x3 feet, target.com).

Make Standing More Doable
Rubber anti-fatigue mats, which can help prevent lower-back pain, are a favorite of restaurant chefs, who spend hours standing. Consider putting them in front of your most-used prep area and range. The stain-resistant NewLife by GelPro Professional Grade Anti-Fatigue Kitchen & Office Comfort Bio-Foam Mat, $100 (20x32 inches, amazon.com), and **Nama Standing Mat,** shown at right, are made of cushy ¾-inch, high-density foam.

Get a Hand With Cleaning
A robotic mop is a quick, efficient way to keep tile, vinyl, and some hardwood floors (those that aren't harmed by water) grime-free. Many are WiFi-connected, so you can direct them to mop while you're away from home. The **Samsung Jetbot Mop VR20T6001MW,** pictured at left, isn't WiFi-connected but holds enough water for 50 minutes of mopping and gets high scores for cleaning.

Consider This Flooring
If you're updating your floors, luxury vinyl flooring, in tiles or planks that click together, could be an option. It's waterproof, and it fends off wear, dents, scratches, and stains far better than sheet vinyl. It's also more comfortable to stand or walk on than tile, and it often has a textured surface that helps prevent falls, Trudeau says. Installed costs are $2 to $6 per square foot. Top-rated picks from CR include **LifeProof Sundance Canyon Hickory HLVSPC030-C,** shown at right, and Malibu Wide Plank French Oak Lombard HDMLCL272RC, $4 per square foot (homedepot.com).

LIGHTING FINDS

Energizer Battery Operated LED Under Cabinet Puck Lights
$28, homedepot.com

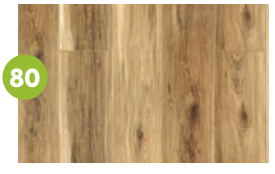
Lepotec 30-LED Motion Sensor Cabinet Lights
$26, amazon.com

SnapPower LED Single MotionLight
$25, amazon.com

FLOORING FIXES

Nama Standing Mat
$79, 22x36 inches, thehouseofnoa.com

80



LifeProof Sundance Canyon Hickory
$4.20 per square foot, homedepot.com

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

2 IMPROVE ORGANIZATION AND STORAGE

Can't always find your favorite cooking gadgets when you need them? Jeffrey Phillip, a professional organizer and interior designer in New York City, suggests assigning kitchen tools to a space based partly on how often you use them. So the measuring cups that are in regular rotation can be stored in the drawer right below your primary prep counter, while cookie sheets for an occasional baking spree can go into a cabinet over the fridge. Here are more pro pointers.

Use Cabinet Space Better

Sort Your Tools Differently
In addition to keeping the items that you use daily, such as peelers and spatulas, close at hand, Phillip advises further organizing them by use. That means sharp cutting implements (like peelers, paring knives, and kitchen shears) go together, as do measuring devices like measuring cups and spoons and meat thermometers. If getting various gadgets to fit neatly into the same area is a challenge, you can customize drawer compartments with items such as the adjustable **Bamboo Drawer Organizers,** pictured on the facing page. Do measuring spoons or cups tend to wander? Magnetic sets, like the **4-Piece Magnetic Measuring Cups by PrepWorks,** shown on the facing page, stay together easily when they're not being used.

Let Labels Guide the Way
Phillip recommends using labels to identify what your drawers, cabinets, and pantry shelves are meant to contain. This will help ensure that items like serving utensils get put back where they belong and that you can put your hands on them quickly when you need them. You can create labels in your choice of size and font with a portable label maker such as the **Brother P-touch Label Maker TH110,** pictured at right. Place the labels in spots such as the front edge of pantry shelves or the inside of drawers.

Keep Heavy Items Accessible
A regularly used small appliance, like an air fryer or a toaster or toaster oven, might "live" on your counter. But professional organizer Kay Patterson, the founder of the Organized Soprano, says it's best to find another home for those you need less often—a place that's tucked away but easy to get to. For instance, a sliding shelf insert just below the countertop can reduce the need to bend to lift a heavy item, like a stand mixer, which can save your back, she says. She likes the Lynk Slide Out Wood Cabinet Organizer, $63, 11x21.5 inches (homedepot.com), which a handyperson or an experienced DIYer can install.

Put a Label on It
Place labels on items you store in anything other than their original packages, so you can quickly tell, for instance, which container has the sugar and which has the flour.

Brother P-touch Label Maker
$30, brother-usa.com

Put Vertical Areas to Work
If convenient cabinet space is short, consider a wall rack for cookware. Some, such as the **Cuisinart 36" Rectangular Bookshelf Rack,** shown on the facing page, have both a shelf and hooks for hanging pots. Some have areas for pot lids. If you're lucky enough to have a storage closet with a door, you can hang a shelved rack such as the Overdoor Organizer by ClosetMaid, $66 (wayfair.com), over the back of it. Fill it with the foods that make sense for you, perhaps canned foods and dry goods such as pancake mixes—so they don't get shoved to the back of storage closet shelves.

Choose Storage Multitaskers
To save time and space, Patterson likes products that have more than one purpose.

Take Stasher silicone storage bags, $10 to $37 (stasherbag.com), which you can use to bake stuffing in the oven and store cooked foods in the refrigerator or freezer; you can wash and reuse them countless times. Sets of **Souper Cubes,** pictured at right, which come in various sizes for prepping meals ahead of time, can go in the oven, refrigerator, and freezer. And you can forget about having to match food storage containers with their lids if you have **Stretch & Seal Silicone Lids,** shown at right; they fit over a variety of containers and can even cover odd-shaped items, like half a fresh melon.

Make Cabinets Easier to Open
If you're finding that cabinet and drawer knobs are a bit hard to grip, you can switch yours out pretty easily for some that feel more comfortable. For instance, something such as the thick, rounded Amerock Cabinet Pulls, $8 (amazon.com), which come in three widths, may work. For more options, you can search online for cabinet hardware that meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Gather Ingredients With a Cart
A rolling cart is useful for moving heavy items (say, that stand mixer or air fryer) and rounding up everything you need for a recipe at one time, Phillip says. Baking a cake? Stop first at the fridge for eggs and butter. Then go to the pantry for flour, sugar, and spices, and bring it all to your prep area at once. A cart that has locking wheels can stay parked beside you as you work. One option: the Hession Solid Wood Kitchen Cart, $113, (wayfair.com), which also folds up for easier storage.

Extend Your Reach Safely
For getting to items in upper cabinets, the ideal step stool should fold, and it should have nonskid treads, slip-resistant feet, and no more than three steps, says Trudeau at the AOTA. Two options: the Cosco 2-Step Household Folding Step Stool Ladder, $31 (homedepot.com), and SocTone 2-Step Folding Step Stool, $50 (amazon.com); both companies make three-step versions too. For grabbing lightweight items from high shelves or off the floor without the need to bend over or kneel, Trudeau suggests using a tool such as the RMS 34 Inch Extra Long Reacher Grabber, $16 (walmart.com).

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

ORGANIZING AIDS

Bamboo Drawer Organizers
$20 for two,
containerstore.com

4-Piece Magnetic Measuring Cups by PrepWorks
$15, shop.progressiveintl.com

Cuisinart 36" Rectangular Bookshelf Rack
$120, cuisinart.com

Souper Cubes
$20, soupercubes.com

Stretch & Seal Silicone Lids
$17 (set of 6)
netzerocompany.com

3 MAKE COOKING EASIER

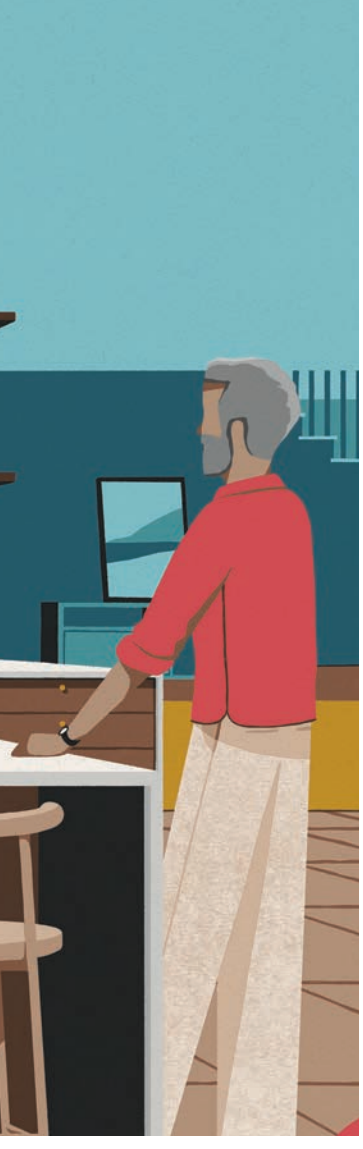
Those of us who spend time on food preparation and cleanup are putting in, on average, a bit over an hour a day in the kitchen, says the 2022 American Time Use Survey from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It's surely plenty more for holiday and other celebratory meals. These steps and expert-recommended gear can help you be more comfortable as you cook, and save time too.

No-Sweat Prep

Relieve Leg and Back Strain
If you find it easier to sit than stand while doing at least some of your food preparation, make sure the table you use is the optimal height for chopping and cutting: between 28 and 34 inches high, with enough space so that you can easily slide a chair underneath.

Give Your Hands a Break
Have you ever avoided a recipe just so you didn't have to struggle with your peeler or that hard-to-open jar? Some simple tools can help. Compared with traditional vegetable peelers, Y-shaped models "are easier to grip," says Trudeau at the AOTA. Peelers "come in all different sizes, shapes, and handles, and are fairly inexpensive," he adds. One good candidate is the **Oxo Good Grips Prep Y-Peeler,** pictured on the facing page, which features a built-in tool for removing potato eyes. For those stubborn jar lids, consider using a helper tool such as the **Tenura Jar Gripper,** shown on the facing page as well. It also comes in a smaller size for $9; this version makes opening twist-off bottle tops easier on your hands. You can make opening cans simpler and safer with the **Oxo Good Grips Smooth Edge Can Opener,** pictured on the facing page; it has an ergonomic handle and makes a smooth cut on the side of the lid, rather than inside it.

Lift Pots With Less Effort
If you're replacing your cookware, you might think about purchasing some pieces that have two handles. The benefit: These pieces can be lifted with both hands,



Get Things Handled
Pots and pans that are filled with food or liquid—such as water for pasta—can be heavy and awkward to hoist. Cookware with two handles may make the load feel that much lighter.

75

✔ **Kenmore Elite Devon Stainless Steel Cookware Set**
$128 (10 pieces), homedepot.com

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

which distributes the weight more evenly. The **Kenmore Elite Devon Stainless Steel Cookware Set,** pictured at left below, features some pieces with two handles. Steamer baskets with an extendable center handle, such as the KitchenAid Universal Steamer Basket, $20 (amazon.com), let you remove foods from the pot more easily after cooking—without the need to carry a hot pot. To protect yourself from hot handles on your pots, silicone handle covers like the **Deluxe Silicone Hot Handle Holder,** shown at right, are a vast improvement over cloth pot holders.

Chop and Slice Trouble-Free
A knife known as a mezzaluna, such as the **Kitchendao Rocker Knife,** pictured at right, works with a gentle rocking motion and allows you to chop items like vegetables and fresh herbs without having to lift your arms. When you're tackling a large amount of hard-to-cut vegetables such as carrots, you can pull out the food processor, of course. But if you'd rather not do that, consider using a hand vegetable chopper, a tool with a small, square grid of metal blades that cuts up produce as it's pushed through the grid. CR recently evaluated six of these, and of the group, the PL8 Pro Veg Chopper, $75 (williams-sonoma.com), was the editor's choice for its stability and the evenness of its cuts. The DuoGlide Duo-Edge Carving Knife, $29 (arthritissupplies.com), has a large, comfortable handle and air pockets in the blade that reduce friction and make it easier to slice a roast or a cooked turkey. And if using a garlic press is literally a pain for you, the Chef'n Garlic Zoom, $17 (chefn.com), might change that: As you roll the tool along your countertop, it will mince any garlic bulbs you've placed inside it.

Simple Time-Savers

Speed Up Preheating
A toaster oven preheats more quickly than one that's full-sized, says CR home reporter Tanya Christian. But many regular ovens now have a rapid preheat setting, which can save you time when roasting meats or veggies. Skip this for baking, because it heats the oven less uniformly than the regular preheat.

Air-Fry This Way
Placing only one layer of food in your air fryer will help it cook more evenly and quickly, with fewer disruptions for flipping it (once, halfway through, is usually adequate). Also, give your items a spritz with an oil sprayer/mister. This will help food cook a bit faster. See page 74 for top-rated air fryers and ovens with air-fryer settings.

Select the Right Burner
To get water boiling more efficiently, cover your pot and set it on the stovetop's most powerful burner (it's usually the largest, located in the front right position). This burner's ideal for stir-frying and sautéing, too, says CR home and appliances writer Paul Hope, who is also a trained chef.

Turn to the Convection Setting
Many ranges, wall ovens, and toaster ovens have a convection feature—which uses fans to circulate hot air, shortening cooking times by up to 25 percent. Some microwaves have this function as well.

Use the Warming Drawer
To warm rolls in a couple of minutes or hold hot dishes without wasting oven space, pop them into this drawer—if your range has this feature. These typically have a default temperature of about 170° F.

COMFORT TOOLS

Oxo Good Grips Prep Y-Peeler
$13, amazon.com

Tenura Jar Gripper
$11, arthritissupplies.com

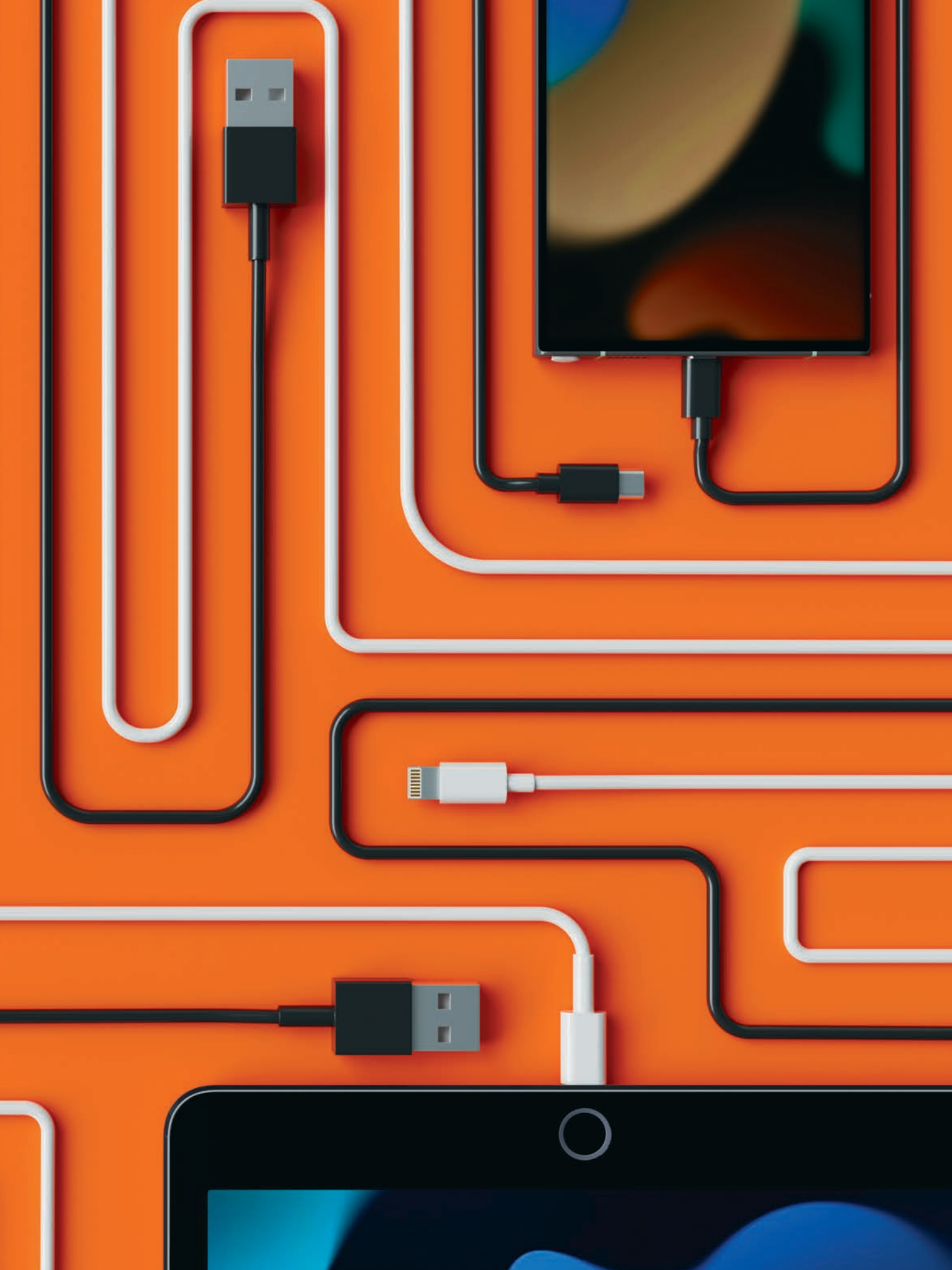
Oxo Good Grips Smooth Edge Can Opener
$26, arthritissupplies.com

Deluxe Silicone Hot Handle Holder
$12, lodgecastiron.com

Kitchendao Rocker Slicer Mincing Knife
$10, amazon.com

HOW TO KEEP YOUR PHONE CHARGED

And your laptop and tablet, too. Here are the best strategies—and cords!—to stay powered up. BY CHRIS RAYMOND / ILLUSTRATION BY LISA SHEEHAN



When was the last time you went a whole day without worrying that your cell phone was running out of juice? At times it seems you can hardly go to the supermarket, much less the airport, without a charging cord in your bag. And we all know that sinking feeling you get when your battery dips to, say, 11 percent and access to an electrical outlet is still hours away.

But keeping your phone and other gadgets charged doesn't have to be anxiety-provoking. With a few tips in hand, you can make it through the day without fear of being stranded with a useless phone. We've assembled some tools and tricks to help you stay charged wherever you go.

BATTERY BASICS

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR BATTERIES

Almost all of our electronic devices are powered by lithium ion (Li-ion) batteries—and those batteries have been getting better in recent years. Increased battery capacity, combined with technologies that adjust power consumption to suit the job at hand, have helped our gadgets run much longer on a single charge.

With top-of-the-line phones, it's not uncommon for CR's lab to get 40 hours of use or more per charge. At the low end, it's roughly 25 hours. A great laptop might deliver 25 hours on a single charge, while some tablets power along for 15 hours.

But how long your device runs depends a lot on how you use it. And when you're low on power, there are steps you can take to maximize the battery life between charges.

So far we've been talking about new batteries. The picture changes as a device gets older. As batteries age, they eventually stop holding a charge for quite as long. After several years, you might see a noticeable difference. We're talking fewer hours of battery life, not minutes, per charge.

While you can't stop this process, you can slow it down somewhat by following a few basic guidelines, which you'll find on page 72.

One extra note, on battery safety: You may have read about Li-ion batteries catching fire, especially the ones that power electric bicycles. A few years ago, the Samsung Galaxy Note7 phone had problems, too. But those are exceptions. The batteries in mainstream devices are usually safe to use as long as they haven't been damaged.

In general, try to avoid exposing your gadgets to the hot sun or temperatures above 95° F. And if any device gets noticeably hot while charging, unplug it immediately.

TIPS AND TACTICS

STAY POWERED ALL DAY

Concerned about your phone going dead while you're on the go? You can make it run for longer on a single charge with a few simple tricks.

Dim the display

Your phone's screen can eat up a lot of power. That's especially true if it's set at maximum brightness, which is rarely necessary.

To preserve power on an iPhone, go to Settings > Display & Brightness, and decrease the brightness using the slider.

On an Android phone such as a Samsung device, go to Settings > Display. (Note that Android phone settings can vary slightly by brand. We're using Samsung as our example because these are the most popular Android phones by far.)

Lower the brightness only to the point where you can still view the screen comfortably. There's not much point in stretching your battery life if you can't actually use your phone.

Phones offer two extra ways to save power using the same Settings menu. First, you can choose to use a dark background. And you can set the display to go to sleep (or Auto-Lock) after just 30 seconds of inactivity. (See "Mastering Your Phone Settings" on the facing page.)

In addition, most phones can save power by automatically adjusting the brightness to suit the lighting

conditions throughout the day. On an iPhone, go to Settings > Accessibility > Display & Text Size > Auto Brightness.

On a Samsung phone, the feature is enabled by default.

Turn down background activity

As you go about your business each day—cooking, shopping, walking—many apps on your phone are diligently working in the background, fetching new email, logging your location, and monitoring the latest developments on Facebook. This work can make the battery run down a bit faster.

Don't need your apps to be constantly updating, and burning through your charge? You can stop them from refreshing their data until you actually open them. On an iPhone, go to Settings > General > Background App Refresh. There, you can choose which apps get to refresh periodically on their own and which ones get updates only when you're using them. Or block all of your apps from updating when they're not in use by clicking on Background App Refresh at the top of the screen and choosing Off.

On a Samsung phone, go to Settings > Battery and Device Care > Battery > Background Usage Limits.

Stop searching for a signal

When you're on the move, your phone is continually looking for the nearest cell tower and WiFi network to keep you connected. That's generally a good thing, but if you're on a hike where those signals are unavailable, it's just a waste of power.

When you want to preserve battery power and you know you'll be out of range, you can activate the Airplane Mode on your phone's main Settings screen. That shuts off the cellular and WiFi functions. (Of course, you won't be able to receive calls or texts, browse the web, or stream online videos or music.)

If you're going to be out of WiFi range all day—running errands, say—you can also save power by shutting off only your WiFi connectivity. (Or, if you'll be connected via WiFi for an extended period, you can turn off your cellular data.)

Use your phone's power-saving mode

Most cell phones can automatically save power by adjusting various settings when your battery dips below a certain level. To buy you a little more time, the phone will reduce screen brightness and temporarily halt downloads and email updates.

Samsung's Power Saving mode also disables battery-sapping features such as the Always On Display. Once you recharge the battery, your original settings are restored.

Apple phones will prompt you to activate Low Power Mode when your battery level reaches 20 percent and again when it drops to 10 percent. Samsung sends a prompt when the battery icon at the top of the screen turns red.

But you don't have to wait. Anytime you're looking to stretch battery life, you can activate these power-saving modes on your own.

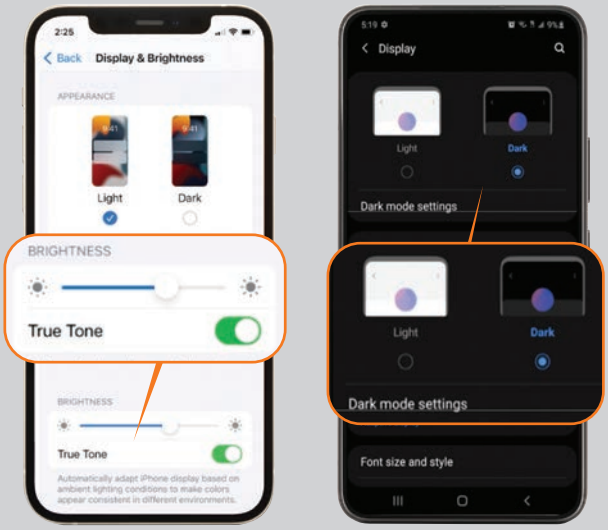
On an iPhone, go to Settings > Battery and toggle the switch for Low Power Mode. On a Samsung phone, go to Settings > Battery and Device Care > Battery. Then just toggle the switch for Power Saving mode.

PHOTOS: CONSUMER REPORTS (8)

MASTERING YOUR PHONE SETTINGS

DIMMING THE DISPLAY

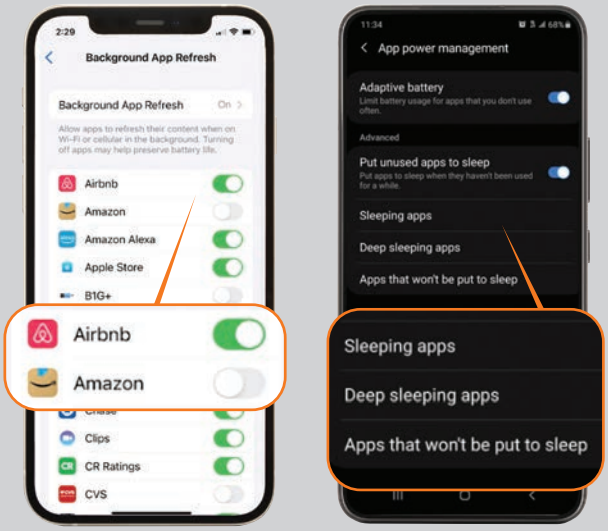
You can dim the brightness with a slider tool. If you select the dark display, the background shifts from white to black. Scroll to Auto-Lock (Apple) or Screen Timeout (Samsung) to make the screen turn off after 30 seconds of inactivity.



APPLE IPHONE SAMSUNG GALAXY

REDUCING APP REFRESHES

In the background activity settings, you can choose which apps get refreshed with new data when you're not using them. (Or you can stop background refreshes on all of them.) For iPhone apps, it's a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down decision. On a Samsung phone, you can assign apps to three buckets: Sleeping, Deep Sleeping, or Never Sleeping. Deep Sleeping apps never refresh in the background, and Sleeping apps refresh "only occasionally."



APPLE IPHONE SAMSUNG GALAXY

BEST PRACTICES

KEEP YOUR BATTERY HEALTHY LONGER

The tactics we've already described can help your phone run all day. The following tips can help you extend the long-term life of your battery.

Avoid extreme temperatures

This one is easy. Try to avoid leaving your phone or laptop in a parked car or on a sun-drenched dashboard when you're driving. That's because very high temperatures can permanently degrade battery capacity. (No, this doesn't mean you should stop using your phone in the summer.) Temperatures below 32° F sap power but are less likely to actually damage the battery.

Go easy on the fast charging

Today's phones often have a fast-charging feature that can refill your battery to 50 percent of capacity in as little as a half-hour's time using a high-powered adapter (see "Your Charging Toolkit" on the facing page).

Fast charging is very handy when you're in a rush, but it has a downside. It degrades Li-ion batteries more rapidly than the relatively slow 5-watt chargers of old, according to researchers from the University of Michigan Energy Institute and the U-M Center for Sustainable Systems, who reviewed academic literature and information from device manufacturers.

Quick charging on occasion is fine, but when there's no rush you're better off using the 5-watt charger from a former phone.

Keep your phone charged to between 20 and 80 percent capacity

Phone makers say your battery will stay healthier longer if you limit the amount of time when it's charged to 100 percent or depleted to 0 percent.

The takeaway? You don't have to monitor it like a fiend, but try to recharge the battery when you see it getting low instead of waiting until the last minute.

Prefer to charge it overnight? Go for it!

If you adopt that 20-to-80-percent guideline, you may find yourself wondering about the wisdom of letting your phone charge overnight, especially given how quickly today's models power up. Doesn't that leave the battery at 100 percent hour after hour?

The answer: Don't worry about it. Phones are designed to minimize stress to the battery when they're charging all night long. In fact, iPhones don't get topped off until right before your typical wake-up time. (You might even see a bedtime notice saying that charging will be complete by, say, 5 a.m.)

So if it's convenient, plug it in and wake up to a fully charged phone. For safety, just leave it in a ventilated spot when charging, not on a blanket or under a pillow.

WHEN IT'S TIME FOR A NEW BATTERY

If your cell phone can barely make it to lunchtime without a recharge, you may be thinking it's time to buy a new phone. But hold off to save yourself some money!

Consider springing for a new battery instead. As long as the phone is in good shape—no cracked screen, for instance—replacing the battery can make the device work like it's brand-new—and could save you money. It's more environmentally sustainable as well.

If you're curious about the health of your battery, here's how to do a spot-check.

On an iPhone, go to Settings > Battery > Battery Health & Charging to see a percentage that reflects the battery's capacity now relative to when it was new.

On a Samsung phone, go to Settings > Battery and Device Care > Diagnostics > Phone Diagnostics > Battery Status. This shows the battery's present capacity (in milliampere hours, or mAh) and tells you if that's good, bad, or normal. (For context, a new Samsung Galaxy S23 comes with a 3,900mAh battery.)

If you do want a new battery, you'll find technicians with the parts and tools to do the work at places like the Apple Store, Best Buy, and uBreakiFix, which is a national chain. All of them can complete the repairs to the manufacturer's specifications.

At the Apple Store, the out-of-warranty price to swap in a fresh battery is $99 for newer models (iPhones 14 and 15) and $49 to $89 for earlier models. Best Buy's Geek Squad provides the service for the Galaxy S9 to the S23 Ultra for $70 to $80.

PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: APPLE; IFIXIT

ILLUSTRATION BY LISA SHEEHAN

YOUR CHARGING TOOLKIT

These accessories can keep your phone running from morning to night.

Lightning to USB-C Cable
These cords work with iPhone models up to the iPhone 14, including the SE, and can charge at different speeds depending on the power adapter you select (5 watt, 20 watt, etc.).

20- or 25-Watt Power Adapter
This will fill a fast-charge phone with a half-tank of battery power in about 30 minutes. Once the battery approaches 50 percent, the charging process slows to preserve the battery's health.

USB-C to USB-C Cable
This is the cord used by most laptops, along with Android phones and the new iPhone 15. It typically supports fast charging, but you can check the packaging to be sure.

5-Watt Charger
Got one of these from an old phone sitting around? Use it for a slow, steady charge that puts less strain on a battery. Or buy a 5-watt charger at Amazon or Target.

Wireless Charging Pad
Want fewer cords in your life? A wireless charger is the way to go. Look for a model that's Qi certified, which makes it compatible with phones from Apple, Google, and Samsung. Some models let you charge your phone, earbuds, and smartwatch all at once.

Portable Charger
No wall outlet nearby? A portable charger like this one will refill your phone's battery on the go.

USB-A to USB-C Cable
A plane or hotel room may present you with an old-school USB-A charging port. This cord has that wider connector at one end and either a slim USB-C (shown) or a Lightning connector at the other end.

CR'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

Cooking Appliances

WE'VE TESTED HUNDREDS OF THE LATEST KITCHEN ESSENTIALS. HERE, THE BEST (AND WORST) FROM OUR TESTS.

If you haven't shopped for new cooking appliances lately, you're in for a few surprises. "In the last decade or so, we've seen an explosion of features on everything from cooktops to microwaves," says Antonella Pomilla, CR's senior market analyst who covers major cooking appliances.

Think toaster ovens that can also air-fry. Ranges that program themselves to crisp up a perfect pizza. Induction cooktops that turn themselves off when you remove the pan. While some new features may seem unnecessary, others can be genuinely helpful, taking care of mundane tasks so that you can focus on the rest of your life.

"Salespeople will try to dazzle shoppers because they know new features help pricier models stand out," Pomilla says. "The trick is to know what's out there, think about how you really cook, and make a list of what's actually important to you."

In this guide, we share the key decisions you'll need to make to find the appliances that will work hardest for you. And, of course, we also highlight the best options from our tests. —*Paul Hope*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ERIC HEINTZ**

- Ranges PAGE 76
- Cooktops PAGE 82
- Wall Ovens PAGE 86
- Microwaves PAGE 88
- Air Fryers PAGE 92
- Toaster Ovens PAGE 94
- Toasters PAGE 96

Ranges

The range is the workhorse of the kitchen. And the latest models pack in more functionality than ever. Once-premium features (such as convection settings and a high-power burner) are now the norm. Newer options include air-fry settings, double ovens, WiFi connectivity, built-in temperature probes, and even in-oven cameras.

HOW TO SHOP: Choose from gas or electric models. Generally, it's easiest and cheapest to stick with the heat source you have. Gas models (which have gas-fueled stovetops and ovens, though dual-fuel options have electric ovens) provide the visual feedback of a flame but emit greenhouse gases and nitrogen dioxide, which has been linked to respiratory issues in children and others with underlying breathing problems. Electrics are emissions-free and span a larger range of prices: Old-timey electric-coil ranges are often the cheapest, while induction ranges are usually costliest. Smoothtops fall in between. Induction ranges tend to heat faster and simmer better than both gas and other electric ranges.

Slide-ins (front-mounted controls, no back panel) look more modern but can cost more. Some controls are digital push buttons; others are knobs. Play around in the store to see what feels comfortable.

Think about how often you'll use extra features, if at all. For instance, a double-oven range may be great for avid cooks who often prep two dishes at different temperatures at once. But if you have more modest needs, you can save several hundred dollars with a single-oven range.

WHAT TO AVOID: We don't recommend pro-style gas ranges. These hefty models, typically built from solid stainless steel, can cost more than $4,000. Our tests routinely find that they underperform compared with their mainstream counterparts. —*Paul Hope*

expert tip "If you're shopping for an electric range, insist on at least one heating element designed to expand or contract to match the bottom of any pot or pan."

TARA CASAREGOLA CR TEST-PROTOCOL MANAGER, KITCHEN

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features + Specs					
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Claimed oven capacity (cu. ft.)	High-power elements	Medium-power elements	Low-power elements	Convection mode	WiFi
30-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP RANGES, SINGLE-OVEN																
GE Profile PSS93YPFS	88	$1,600	⏫	●	↑	⏫	⏫	↑	⏫	NA	5.3	1	2	1	●	●
LG LREL6321S	88	$700	⏫	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	↑	⏫	NA	6.3	2	0	2		●
LG LSEL6337D	86	$1,600	⏫	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	↑	⏫	↑	6.3	2	0	2	●	●
GE JB735SPSS	86	$800	⏫	●	↑	⏫	⏫	●	⏫	⏫	5.3	2	0	2	●	
LG LREL6325F	85	$1,000	⏫	●	⏫	⏫	↑	⏫	⏫	↑	6.3	2	0	2	●	●

PHOTOS, ALL SPREADS: CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURERS (APPLIANCES). ICONS: RODRIGO DAMATI

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features + Specs					
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Claimed oven capacity (cu. ft.)	High-power elements	Medium-power elements	Low-power elements	Convection mode	WiFi
30-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP RANGES, SINGLE-OVEN *Continued*																
$ **GE** Profile PB935YPFS	85	$980	⇈	I	⇈	↑	↑	↑	⇈	⇈	5.3	1	2	1	●	●
✓ **Samsung** NE63T8711SS	84	$1,100	I	↓	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈	6.3	2	0	2	●	●
$ **GE** JB655SKSS	84	$785	⇈	I	⇈	I	⇈	↑	⇈	⇈	5.3	2	0	2	●	
✓ **Bosch** HEI8056U	83	$2,160	⇈	I	↑	⇈	↑	↑	↑	↑	5.9	2	0	2	●	
✓ **LG** LSEL6333F	83	$1,200	⇈	I	⇈	⇈	↑	↑	⇈	I	6.3	2	0	2	●	●
$ **Samsung** NE63A6711SS	82	$900	I	↓	↑	⇈	⇈	↑	⇈	⇈	6.3	1	2	1	●	●
✓ **Frigidaire** FCFE3083AS	81	$900	⇈	⇊	↑	⇈	↑	⇈	↑	⇈	5.3	2	0	2	●	
$ **Samsung** NE63T8111SS	81	$850	I	↓	↑	⇈	↑	↑	⇈	⇈	6.3	2	0	2		●
GE JB645RKSS	80	$700	⇈	I	⇈	⇈	I	↑	⇈	⇈	5.3	2	0	2		
Hisense HBE3501CPS	78	$750	–	–	⇈	⇈	⇈	↓	⇈	⇈	5.8	2	0	2	●	
Frigidaire Gallery GCRE3060AF	78	$850	⇈	⇊	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	⇈	5.7	2	0	2	●	
Frigidaire Gallery GCRE302LAF	76	$1,020	⇈	⇊	⇈	↑	I	⇈	↑	↑	5.4	2	0	2		
GE JS645SLSS	74	$880	⇈	I	↑	I	I	I	⇈	⇈	5.3	2	0	2		
Frigidaire FFEH3051VS	72	$1,105	⇈	⇊	↑	I	I	⇈	↑	NA	5.0	2	0	2		
Frigidaire FFEH3054US	72	$1,150	⇈	⇊	↑	I	I	⇈	↑	↑	5.0	2	0	2		
Whirlpool WEE515S0LS	72	$1,485	↑	↓	↑	I	⇈	I	↑	⇈	4.8	2	0	2		
Frigidaire FFEF3054TS	72	$730	⇈	⇊	↑	⇈	I	↓	↑	↑	5.3	2	0	2		
Café CES700P2MS1	72	$2,430	↑	I	⇈	↑	↑	I	↑	I	5.7	1	2	1	●	●
GE JBS60RKSS	71	$665	⇈	I	⇈	I	↓	↑	⇈	NA	5.3	1	1	2		
Samsung NE63A6311SS	70	$730	I	↓	⇈	⇈	⇈	↓	⇈	⇈	6.3	2	0	2		●
Maytag MER8800FZ	68	$1,025	↑	↓	⇈	⇈	⇈	↑	⇈	⇊	6.4	2	0	2	●	
KitchenAid KFEG504KPS	66	$1,150	I	↓	↑	⇈	⇈	I	⇈	⇊	6.4	2	0	2	●	
Haier QSS740RNSS	65	$1,775	–	–	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	NA	5.7	1	1	2	●	●
Whirlpool WFE550S0LZ	63	$850	↑	↓	⇈	↑	I	↓	↑	I	5.3	2	0	2	●	
Whirlpool WFE775H0HZ	62	$1,320	↑	↓	↑	⇈	I	I	⇈	⇊	6.4	2	0	2	●	
Frigidaire FCFE3062AS	62	$830	⇈	⇊	⇈	⇈	↓	↓	↑	NA	5.3	2	0	2		
Amana AER6303MMS	61	$600	⇈	⇊	I	↑	I	↓	↑	NA	4.8	0	2	2		
KitchenAid KSEB900ESS	60	$2,860	I	↓	↑	⇈	I	⇈	↑	⇊	7.1	2	0	2	●	
Maytag MER6600FB	59	$915	↑	↓	↑	⇈	I	↓	↑	I	5.3	2	0	2		
Whirlpool WFE975H0HV	59	$1,610	↑	↓	⇈	I	↑	↑	⇈	⇊	6.4	2	0	2	●	●
Whirlpool WEE750H0HZ	59	$2,300	↑	↓	↑	I	⇈	↑	⇈	⇊	6.4	2	0	2	●	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features + Specs					
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Claimed oven capacity (cu. ft.)	High-power elements	Medium-power elements	Low-power elements	Convection mode	WiFi
30-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP RANGES, SINGLE-OVEN *Continued*																
GE JB480DTBB	58	$1,185									5.0	0	4	0		
Samsung NE59T4311SS	58	$750									5.9	2	0	2		
Whirlpool WEE745H0LZ	58	$1,100									6.4	2	0	2	●	
Maytag MER4600LS	57	$815								NA	5.3	2	0	2		
Whirlpool WFE535S0LZ	56	$830									5.3	2	0	2	●	
Frigidaire FCRE3052AS	54	$700								NA	5.3	2	0	2		
Whirlpool WFE505W0HB	53	$675								NA	5.3	2	0	2		
Ikea Lagan 804.620.54	53	$750	–	–						NA	5.3	2	0	2		
Whirlpool WFE320M0JS	52	$650								NA	5.3	2	0	2		
Whirlpool WFE525S0JZ	49	$845									5.3	2	0	2		
Maytag MER7700LZ	44	$850									5.3	2	0	2	●	
30-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP RANGES, DOUBLE-OVEN																
✓ **LG** LTE4815ST	86	$2,200									7.3	2	0	2	●	●
✓ **Samsung** NE63T8751SG	82	$2,450									6.3	2	0	2	●	●
$ **LG** LDE4413ST	81	$1,000									7.3	2	0	2	●	●
✓ **Café** CES750P4MW2	81	$3,240									6.7	1	3	0	●	●
KitchenAid KFED500EBS	80	$2,145									6.7	2	0	2	●	
Samsung NE63A6751SS	80	$1,100									6.3	1	2	1	●	●
GE JBS86SPSS	77	$1,100								NA	6.6	2	0	2	●	
Maytag MET8800FZ	77	$1,710									6.7	1	2	1	●	
Whirlpool WGE745C0FS	76	$1,450									6.7	2	0	2	●	
30-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION RANGES																
✓ **LG** LSE4616ST	94	$2,700									6.3	2	2	0	●	●
✓ **GE** Profile PHS93XYPFS	89	$3,915								NA	5.3	3	1	0	●	●
✓ **Frigidaire** Gallery FGIH3047VF	87	$1,740									5.4	4	0	0	●	
✓ **Samsung** NE63T8951SG	86	$3,820									6.3	3	1	0	●	●
✓ **Ikea** Tvarsaker 404.660.06	81	$1,400	–	–							5.4	4	0	0	●	
Samsung NE63B8211SS	80	$1,100									6.3	3	1	0		●
Café CHS90XP2MS1	77	$4,340	–	–						NA	5.7	3	1	0	●	●
Bosch 800 Series HIS8055U	69	$4,125								NA	3.9	4	0	0	●	

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features + Specs					
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Claimed oven capacity (cu. ft.)	High-power burners	Medium-power burners	Low-power burners	Convection mode	WiFi
30-INCH GAS OR DUAL-FUEL RANGES, SINGLE-OVEN																
✓ **LG** LSDL6336F (dual-fuel)	87	$1,500	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	6.3	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **LG** LSGL6335D	82	$1,500	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	6.3	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **LG** LSD4913ST (dual-fuel)	81	$1,955	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌄	6.3	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **LG** Studio LSGS6338F	80	$2,300	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌃⌃	–	6.3	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Samsung** NX60T8711SS	80	$2,160	⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	6.0	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **GE** Profile PGS930YPFS	80	$1,800	⌃⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	5.6	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Café** C2S900P2MS1 (dual-fuel)	78	$3,405	–	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	5.7	3	2	1	●	●
✓ **Samsung** NX60T8111SS	76	$1,300	⌃	–	–	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌃	–	6.0	2	2	1		●
✓ **GE** JGS760SPSS	76	$1,100	⌃⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	5.6	2	2	1	●	●
$ **GE** JGB735SPSS	75	$800	⌃⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	5.0	2	2	1	●	
✓ **Café** CGB500P2MS1	75	$1,535	–	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	5.6	2	2	1	●	●
$ **GE** JGBS30DEKWW	75	$530	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃⌃	⌃	–	⌃	NA	4.8	1	2	1		
✓ **GE** JGSS61SPSS	74	$1,340	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	NA	5.3	2	1	1		
$ **GE** JGBS66REKSS	74	$650	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃⌃	⌃	–	⌃	NA	5.0	2	2	1		
$ **LG** LRGL5823S	74	$830	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃⌃	⌄	5.8	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Samsung** NX60T8511SS	73	$1,100	⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃	–	6.0	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Frigidaire** Gallery GCRG3060AF	73	$900	⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	5.0	2	2	1	●	
$ **GE** JGBS61RPSS	72	$650	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃⌃	⌃	–	⌃	NA	4.8	1	2	1		
✓ **Haier** QGSS740RNSS	72	$1,815	–	–	–	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	NA	5.6	2	1	1	●	●
✓ **Frigidaire** Professional PCFG3078AF	71	$2,490	⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	–	–	–	⌃	5.6	3	1	1	●	
✓ **LG** LSGL5831F	71	$1,125	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	5.8	2	2	1		●
Ikea Grundlagga 302.620.42	70	$1,300	–	–	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	5.0	2	2	1	●	
Café CGS700M2NS5	70	$3,240	–	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	–	–	5.6	3	2	1	●	●
Samsung NX60A6111SS	70	$770	⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌄	⌃⌃	NA	6.0	2	2	1		●
Frigidaire FFGH3054US	69	$1,400	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	⌃	–	–	⌃	5.0	2	2	1		
LG LRG3194ST	68	$1,075	⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	–	⌃⌃	⌄	5.4	2	2	1	●	
Bosch 800 Series HDI8056U (dual-fuel)	67	$2,785	⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	–	⌃	⌄	4.6	2	1	2	●	
GE JGB635REKSS	66	$915	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃	–	–	–	–	5.0	1	2	1		
Frigidaire FFGF3052TS	64	$730	⌃	–	⌃	⌃	–	–	–	NA	4.2	2	2	1		
GE JGBS60DEKWW	63	$675	⌃⌃	–	–	⌃	–	⌄	⌃	NA	4.8	1	2	1		
Frigidaire FFGF3054TS	63	$750	⌃	–	⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌄	⌃	⌃	5.0	2	2	1		

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features + Specs					
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Claimed oven capacity (cu. ft.)	High-power burners	Medium-power burners	Low-power burners	Convection mode	WiFi
30-INCH GAS OR DUAL-FUEL RANGES, SINGLE-OVEN *Continued*																
Samsung NX60A6311SS	63	$730	▲	●	▲	▲	▲	▼	▲	●	6.0	2	2	1		●
LG LRGL5821S	60	$800	▲	▲	●	▲▲	●	▼	▲▲	NA	5.8	2	2	1		●
Bosch 800 Series HGI8056UC	56	$2,420	▲	▲	●	▼	▲	▼	●	●	4.8	2	1	2	●	
KitchenAid KSGG700ESS	56	$1,700	●	●	●	●	▲▲	●	▲▲	▼▼	5.8	2	2	1	●	
Electrolux ECFD3068AS (dual-fuel)	52	$3,900	●	▼	●	▲	▲	▼	▲	NA	4.6	4	0	1	●	
Insignia NS-RGFGSS1	51	$625	–	–	▲	▼▼	▲	▼	▲	NA	4.8	3	1	1	●	
Whirlpool WEG750H0HZ	50	$2,400	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲▲	●	▲▲	▼▼	5.8	2	2	1	●	●
Whirlpool WFG775H0HV	50	$1,410	●	▼	▲	▼▼	▲▲	▼	▲▲	▼▼	5.8	2	2	1	●	
Whirlpool WFG975H0HV	49	$1,630	●	▼	●	▼	▲▲	●	▲▲	▼▼	5.8	2	2	1	●	●
Hotpoint RGBS330DRWW	48	$480	▲	▼	●	▲	▼	▼	▲	NA	4.8	1	2	1		
Maytag MGR8800FZ	46	$1,020	●	▼	▲	▼▼	▲▲	▼	▲▲	▼▼	5.8	2	2	1	●	
Whirlpool WFG505M0MS	45	$600	●	▼	●	▼	▼	▼	▲	NA	5.1	2	2	1		
Whirlpool WEG745H0LZ	43	$1,935	●	▼	●	▼	▲	▼▼	▲▲	▼▼	5.8	2	2	1	●	
KitchenAid KFGG500ESS	42	$1,250	●	●	▲	▼	▲▲	▼▼	▲▲	▼▼	5.8	2	2	1	●	
Frigidaire FCRG3052AS	40	$730	▲	●	▲	▲	▲▲	▼▼	●	NA	5.0	2	2	1		
Maytag MGR6600FB	39	$960	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	▼	▲	▲▲	5.0	2	2	1		
Amana AGR5330BAS	39	$830	●	▼▼	●	▼▼	▲	▼	▲	NA	5.1	0	3	1		
Thor Kitchen LRG3001U	38	$2,000	–	–	▲	▼▼	●	▼▼	▲	NA	4.55	1	2	2	●	
Whirlpool WFG525S0JZ	34	$855	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	▼▼	▲	▲	5.0	2	2	1		
Frigidaire FCFG3062AS	33	$825	▲	●	▲	●	●	▼▼	▲	NA	5.1	2	2	1		
Whirlpool WEG515S0LS	29	$1,460	●	▼	●	●	▲	▼▼	▲	▲▲	5.0	2	1	1		
30-INCH GAS OR DUAL-FUEL RANGES, DOUBLE-OVEN																
✓ **LG** LTGL6937F	81	$2,150	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	●	6.9	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **GE** Profile PGB965YPFS	80	$2,070	▲▲	●	▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▼	6.8	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **LG** Signature LUTD4919SN (dual-fuel)	78	$3,000	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	7.3	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Café** CGS750P4MW2	76	$3,600	●	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	▲▲	▲	6.7	3	2	1	●	●
✓ **Café** C2S950P2MS1 (dual-fuel)	76	$3,300	●	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲▲	▲	7.0	3	2	1	●	●
$ **GE** JGBS86SPSS	75	$1,200	▲▲	●	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	NA	6.8	2	2	1	●	
✓ **GE** JGSS86SPSS	74	$2,220	▲▲	●	▲	▲▲	●	▲	▲▲	NA	6.7	2	2	1	●	
✓ **Samsung** NX60T8751SG	72	$2,300	▲	●	▲	▲	▲	●	▲▲	▲	6.0	2	2	1	●	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features + Specs					
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Claimed oven capacity (cu. ft.)	High-power burners	Medium-power burners	Low-power burners	Convection mode	WiFi
30-INCH GAS OR DUAL-FUEL RANGES, DOUBLE-OVEN *Continued*																
Samsung NX60A6751SS	61	$1,115	▲	●	▲	▲▲	▲	▼	▲	●	6.0	2	2	1	•	•
KitchenAid KFGD500EBS	59	$2,395	●	●	●	▲▲	▲	▼	▲▲	●	6.0	1	2	2	•	
LG LTG4715ST	55	$2,705	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▼	▲	▼	6.9	2	2	1	•	•
36-INCH PRO-STYLE GAS OR DUAL-FUEL RANGES, SINGLE-OVEN																
Electrolux ECFD3668AS (dual-fuel)	65	$5,600	▼	●	●	▲▲	▲	●	▲	NA	4.4	6	0	0	•	
Viking 5 Series VGR5366BSS	58	$8,320	▼▼	●	▲	▲▲	●	▼	▲▲	NA	5.1	6	0	0	•	
JennAir JGRP436HL	54	$6,700	●	▼	▲	▲▲	▲	▼	▲	▼	5.1	5	1	0	•	•
30-INCH PRO-STYLE GAS OR DUAL-FUEL RANGES, SINGLE-OVEN																
✓ **Monogram** ZGP304NTSS	79	$5,600	●	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	NA	5.7	4	0	0	•	•
KitchenAid KFDC500JSS (dual-fuel)	68	$5,265	●	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	●	4.1	3	0	1	•	•
Wolf GR304	60	$5,675	●	▲▲	●	▲▲	▼	●	▲	NA	4.4	3	1	0	•	
Thermador Pro Harmony PRG305WH	52	$6,000	●	▲▲	●	▲	▼	▲	●	NA	4.4	2	3	0	•	
Viking 5 Series VGIC53024BSS	49	$5,130	▼▼	●	●	●	▼	▲▲	●	NA	4.0	4	0	0	•	
KitchenAid KFGC500JPA	42	$4,410	●	▲	●	▲	▲	▼▼	●	▲▲	4.1	3	0	1	•	•
ZLine RA30 (dual-fuel)	41	$2,400	–	–	▲	▼	●	▼	●	NA	4.0	2	1	1	•	
Bosch 800 Series HGS8055UC	38	$3,330	▲	●	▲	●	▼▼	▼▼	▲	NA	3.7	1	2	2	•	
Fisher & Paykel OR30SCG4X1	33	$5,100	▼	●	▲	▼▼	▼▼	●	▼	NA	3.5	2	2	0	•	

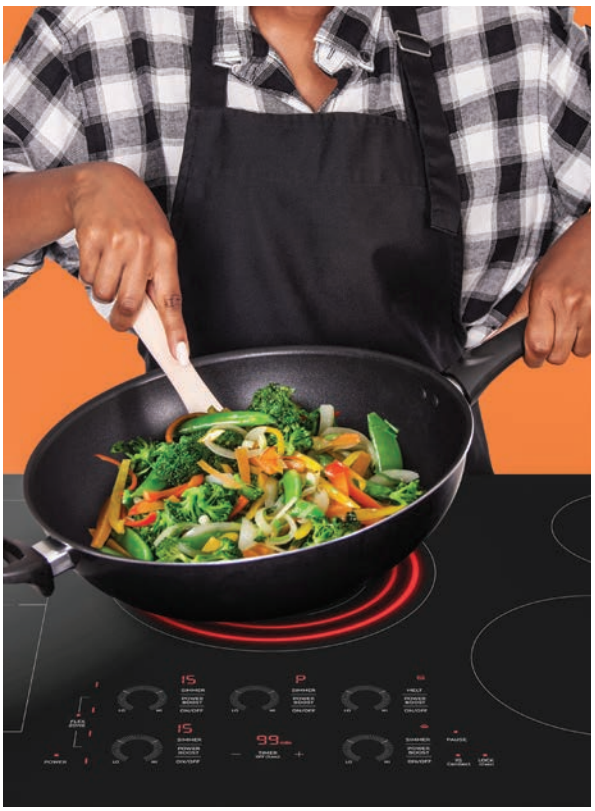
HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines test results for cooktop and oven performance with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. **Predicted reliability** estimates the likelihood that new ranges from a given brand will develop problems or break within the first five years, and **owner satisfaction** is determined by the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend the range they purchased to friends and family members. In cases of insufficient survey data, indicated by a gray dash (–), we assume average reliability and satisfaction. **Cooktop high** measures how quickly the highest-power burner heats a large pot of water to a near-boil. **Cooktop low** indicates how steadily a low-power burner maintains a simmer and whether the highest-power burner, set to low, maintains a low heat. **Baking** reflects how evenly the oven bakes cakes and a full tray of cookies on multiple racks. **Broiling** reflects how hot the broiler gets and how evenly it heats. **Oven capacity** is a measure of usable space in the cavity. **Self-cleaning** evaluates the oven's ability to clean itself of a lab-calibrated mixture of sticky foods (which includes pie filling, lard, eggs, and tapioca).

Cooktops

Instead of a range, you might opt for a cooktop and a separate wall oven. Ranges are generally less expensive than the total cost of a separate cooktop and wall oven. But opting for separate appliances can offer more flexibility: A cooktop can be installed in more places, including the countertop of a central island. A wall oven can be installed at any height, so you won't have to bend down to remove a heavy roast or Thanksgiving turkey. Bear in mind that if your kitchen doesn't currently have separate cooking appliances, you'll probably need to spend thousands of dollars as part of a larger remodel to add cabinets for a wall oven and new gas and/or electric lines.

● **HOW TO SHOP:** As with ranges, you can choose between gas and electric, then consider the features that make the most sense to you. Beyond that, evaluate the cooktop's sizing. Most are 30 or 36 inches wide, and that's what we test. If you entertain frequently, a larger size enables you to work on as many as six burners at once. But most people will be well-served by a 30-inch model with four or five burners, sometimes costing a few hundred dollars less. While you can shop at big-box stores (Home Depot, Lowe's), you'll often find more selection at dedicated appliance retailers (AJ Madison, Appliances Connection) and showrooms (like those in local design centers or at Ferguson, a national chain).

● **WHAT TO AVOID:** Don't feel compelled to match your cooktop brand to your wall-oven brand. There's no performance advantage. You're better off choosing the model with features that fit best in your kitchen and align with the way you cook. —*Paul Hope*

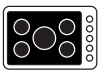


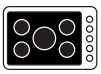
expert tip "If you go with gas, choose a model with continuous cooking grates. These will make it easy to slide pans between burners."

SUE COLLOMB CR LAB TECHNICIAN, COOKTOPS

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		Features + Specs				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	High heat	Low heat	High-power elements	Medium-power elements	Low-power elements	Expandable elements	Touch controls
36-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP COOKTOPS											
$ **LG** LCE3610SB	91	$1,115	⌃	!	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	2	1	1	●	●
✓ **KitchenAid** KCED606GBL	89	$2,305	⌃	!	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	2	1	2	●	
✓ **Samsung** NZ36K7570RG	89	$1,925	⌃	!	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Café** CEP90361NBB	87	$1,835	!	!	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Bosch** Benchmark Series NETP668SUC	85	$1,600	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	1	3	1	●	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results: Predicted reliability	Survey Results: Owner satisfaction	Test Results: High heat	Test Results: Low heat	Features + Specs: High-power elements	Features + Specs: Medium-power elements	Features + Specs: Low-power elements	Features + Specs: Expandable elements	Features + Specs: Touch controls
36-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP COOKTOPS *Continued*											
✓ **GE** JP5036DJBB	81	$1,300	⌃	I	⌃	⌃⌃	2	1	2	●	●
Whirlpool WCE55US6HB	79	$900	⌃	I	⌃	⌃	2	0	2	●	
GE Profile PP7036SJSS	62	$1,565	⌃	I	⌃	I	2	2	1	●	
Café CEP70362MS1	46	$1,400	I	I	⌃	⌄⌄	2	2	1	●	
30-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP COOKTOPS											
✓ **Bosch** 800 Series NET8068SUC	91	$1,400	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	1	2	1		●
$ **LG** LCE3010SB	91	$1,000	⌃	I	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	1	2	1	●	●
✓ **KitchenAid** KCED600GSS	89	$2,285	⌃	I	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	2	0	2	●	
✓ **Samsung** NZ30K7570RG	89	$1,755	⌃	I	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	1	3	1	●	●
$ **Frigidaire** Gallery FGEC3068UB	88	$995	⌃⌃	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	1	2	2	●	
$ **Sharp** SCR3041GB	88	$650	–	–	⌃	⌃⌃	1	2	1	●	●
✓ **KitchenAid** KCES550HBL	87	$1,225	⌃	I	⌃	⌃⌃	2	1	2	●	
✓ **Monogram** ZEU30RSJSS	86	$2,000	⌃⌃	I	⌃	⌃⌃	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Café** CEP90302NSS	85	$1,865	I	I	⌃	⌃⌃	2	2	1	●	●
✓ **Thermador** Masterpiece CET305YB	82	$1,950	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	1	2	1	●	●
Maytag MEC8830HB	80	$1,055	⌃	I	⌃	⌃	1	2	1	●	
GE JEP5030DTBB	77	$800	⌃	I	⌃⌃	⌃	2	2	1	●	
Wolf Contemporary CE304C/B	77	$2,405	I	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	2	0	2	●	●
Frigidaire FFEC3025UB	77	$600	⌃⌃	⌄	⌃	⌃	2	0	2	●	
Ikea Neddragen 004.620.58	76	$455	–	–	⌃	⌃	2	0	2	●	
Samsung NZ30R5330RK	73	$750	⌃	I	⌃	⌃⌃	1	3	0	●	
GE JP3530SJSS	69	$1,100	⌃	I	⌃	⌃	2	1	1	●	
Whirlpool WCE77US0HB	68	$955	⌃	I	⌃	I	2	0	2	●	
Amana AEC6540KFB	67	$810	⌃⌃	⌄	⌃	I	1	1	2		
Whirlpool WCE55US0HB	64	$650	⌃	I	⌃	I	1	1	2	●	
GE JP3030DJBB	54	$650	⌃	I	⌃	⌄	2	0	2		
36-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION COOKTOPS											
✓ **GE** Profile PHP9036DJBB	95	$2,200	I	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	4	1	0	NA	●
✓ **Frigidaire** Professional FPIC3677RF	94	$2,180	I	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	4	1	0	NA	
$ **Frigidaire** FFIC3626TB	93	$1,055	I	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	3	2	0	NA	●
✓ **Dacor** Transitional DTI36P876BB	92	$2,835	I	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	3	1	0	NA	●
Samsung NZ36K7880UG	89	$2,485	⌄	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	4	1	0	NA	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		Features + Specs				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	High heat	Low heat	High-power elements	Medium-power elements	Low-power elements	Expandable elements	Touch controls
30-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION COOKTOPS											
Bosch 800 Series NIT8060UC	100	$2,350	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	4	0	0	NA	●
Wolf Contemporary CI304C/B	95	$2,500	🔼	⏫	⏫	⏫	3	0	1	NA	●
GE Profile PHP9030DJBB	95	$2,125	❗	⏫	⏫	⏫	3	1	0	NA	●
Café CHP95302MSS	93	$2,300	❗	⏫	⏫	⏫	3	1	0	NA	●
Frigidaire Gallery FGIC3066TB	93	$1,000	❗	⏫	⏫	⏫	3	1	0	NA	●
Dacor Transitional DTI30P876BB	92	$2,445	❗	🔼	⏫	⏫	3	1	0	NA	●
Viking Virtuoso 6 Series MVIC6304BBG	91	$3,710	–	–	⏫	⏫	3	1	0	NA	●
Electrolux ECCI3068AS	90	$2,200	❗	🔼	⏫	⏫	4	0	0	NA	●
Samsung NZ30K7880UG	89	$2,230	🔽	🔼	⏫	⏫	3	1	0	NA	●
Ikea Sardrag 804.620.68	83	$800	🔽	🔼	⏫	⏫	3	1	0	NA	●
Whirlpool WCI55US0JB	81	$1,760	🔼	❗	🔼	⏫	2	2	0	NA	●

Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		Features + Specs			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	High heat	Low heat	High-power burners	Medium-power burners	Low-power burners	Continuous grates
36-INCH GAS COOKTOPS										
Samsung NA36N7755TG	93	$1,650	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	2	2	1	●
Monogram ZGU36RSLSS	84	$2,500	❗	🔼	🔼	⏫	2	3	0	●
Thermador Masterpiece Star SGSX365TS	82	$2,400	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	3	2	0	●
Viking 5 Series VGSU53616BSS	81	$3,090	❗	🔼	🔼	⏫	3	2	1	●
GE Profile PGP7036SLSS	78	$1,900	🔼	❗	🔼	⏫	2	2	1	●
Café CGP70362NS1	76	$1,900	❗	🔼	🔼	⏫	2	2	1	●
GE Profile PGP9036SLSS	75	$2,200	🔼	❗	❗	⏫	2	2	1	●
GE JGP5036SLSS	73	$1,500	🔼	❗	❗	⏫	2	2	1	●
Frigidaire Gallery FGGC3645QS	70	$830	🔼	❗	🔼	🔼	2	2	1	●
KitchenAid KCGS556ESS	70	$1,300	🔼	❗	🔼	❗	1	3	1	●
Maytag MGC9536DS	69	$1,120	❗	❗	🔼	🔼	2	2	1	●
KitchenAid KCGS356ESS	67	$1,200	🔼	❗	🔼	❗	2	2	1	●
Frigidaire Professional FPGC3677RS	64	$1,545	🔼	❗	🔼	❗	2	2	1	●
JennAir JGC3536GS	56	$1,950	🔽	❗	🔼	❗	4	0	1	●
Miele KM 3474 G	52	$2,700	⏬	🔼	🔼	❗	3	2	0	●
LG LCG3611ST	46	$1,200	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	2	2	1	●

Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results: Predicted reliability	Survey Results: Owner satisfaction	Test Results: High heat	Test Results: Low heat	Features + Specs: High-power burners	Features + Specs: Medium-power burners	Features + Specs: Low-power burners	Features + Specs: Continuous grates
36-INCH GAS COOKTOPS *Continued*										
Whirlpool WCG97US6HS	46	$1,310	^	–	^	ˇˇ	2	2	1	●
KitchenAid KCGD506GSS	43	$2,600	^	–	–	ˇˇ	3	1	1	
30-INCH GAS COOKTOPS										
✓ **Samsung** NA30N7755TG	93	$1,550	^^	^^	^^	^^	2	2	1	●
$ **Samsung** NA30N6555TS	90	$1,250	^^	^^	^	^^	2	2	1	●
✓ **Monogram** ZGU30RSLSS	84	$2,400	–	^	^	^^	2	3	0	●
✓ **Thermador** Masterpiece Star SGSX305TS	81	$2,200	^	^^	–	^^	1	4	0	●
$ **Samsung** NA30R5310FS	79	$700	^^	^^	–	^^	2	1	1	●
✓ **GE** Profile PGP7030SLSS	78	$1,700	^	–	^	^^	2	2	1	●
✓ **Wolf** Professional CG304P/S	77	$2,220	–	^^	^	^^	2	2	0	●
✓ **Café** CGP70302NS1	76	$1,845	–	^	^	^^	2	2	1	●
✓ **Viking** 3 Series RVGC33015BSS	76	$2,090	–	^	–	^^	2	2	1	●
✓ **GE** Profile PGP9030SLSS	75	$1,955	^	–	–	^^	2	2	1	●
GE JGP5030SLSS	73	$1,300	^	–	–	^^	2	2	1	●
Frigidaire FFGC3026SS	70	$555	^	–	–	^	2	1	1	●
Café CGP95302MS1	67	$2,100	–	^	^	^	2	2	1	●
KitchenAid KCGS550ESS	64	$1,200	^	–	–	–	1	3	1	●
KitchenAid KCGS350ESS	64	$1,100	^	–	–	–	1	3	1	●
Ikea Brannpunkt 604.620.69	64	$545	–	–	^	ˇ	2	2	1	●
Frigidaire Professional FPGC3077RS	64	$1,440	^	–	^	–	2	2	1	●
Dacor Contemporary DTG30M954FS	63	$2,200	–	–	^	–	2	2	0	●
Frigidaire Gallery FGGC3047QS	62	$1,050	^	–	^	ˇ	2	2	1	●
Bosch 500 Series NGM5058UC	58	$1,050	^	^^	^	ˇ	1	1	3	●
JennAir JGC3530GS	56	$1,850	ˇ	–	^	–	3	1	1	●
Frigidaire FCCG3027AS	56	$650	^	–	^	ˇ	1	2	1	●
KitchenAid KCGS950ESS	56	$1,575	^	–	–	–	1	3	1	●
Whirlpool W3CG3014XW	54	$430	^	–	–	–	0	3	1	
Electrolux ECCG3068AS	50	$1,800	ˇ	ˇˇ	^	ˇ	2	2	1	●
LG LCG3011ST	46	$1,110	^^	^	^	ˇˇ	2	2	1	●
KitchenAid KCGD500GSS	43	$2,500	^	–	–	ˇˇ	2	1	1	

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at **CR.org/cooktops**.

HOW WE TEST: Similar to ranges, the **Overall Score** for cooktops combines test results with survey data for **predicted reliability** and **owner satisfaction**. **High heat** is a measure of how quickly the highest-power burner heats a large pot of water to a near-boil. **Low heat** indicates how steadily a low-power burner maintains a simmer and whether the highest-power burner, set to low, maintains a low heat.

Wall Ovens

Wall ovens are built into supporting cabinetry, and almost all are electric. Once-novel features, such as convection, are now the norm, but options such as built-in temperature probes and an air-fry setting will cost you more. Many wall ovens are self-cleaning, and some have quicker steam-clean settings for smaller messes.

● **HOW TO SHOP:** Single wall ovens will suffice for most households. But if you're a busy baker, particularly around the holidays, a double oven, with two cavities of the same size, can be helpful. The catch? They're also often double the price of a single wall oven.

Another alternative is the combo wall oven, which pairs a built-in microwave over a wall oven. But you'll pay a premium there, too—single wall ovens start around $1,200, while combos are at least $2,000.

Focus on the features you care about. A built-in probe for cooking to an exact internal temperature is great if you often make roasts. Some models even shut off once the desired food temperature is reached. Ovens with air-fry settings have more capacity than a countertop air fryer. With WiFi ovens, you can change oven settings or even shut them off from afar.

● **WHAT TO AVOID:** Because wall ovens are often installed in your line of sight and therefore are highly visible, avoid exterior finishes in plain stainless steel. Instead, look for smudgeproof or black stainless steel. And because you'll also be able to see inside the oven cavity more easily, choose a model with a highly rated self-clean cycle. *—Paul Hope*

expert tip "Wall ovens installed at eye level may require you to get on your tiptoes to reach over the hot oven door to remove food. So try it in-store to figure out what height feels comfortable for you."

ARIANNA COGER CR LAB TECHNICIAN, WALL OVENS

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results				Features + Specs				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Covered element	Convection mode	Temperature probe	Stainless steel	WiFi
30-INCH SINGLE ELECTRIC WALL OVENS													
✓ **Café** CTS70DM2NS5	90	$3,400	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	●	●	●	●	●
✓ **KitchenAid** KOSE500ESS	88	$3,100	➖	➖	🔼	⏫	⏫	⏫	●	●	●	Available	
✓ **Café** Professional Series CTS90FP2NS1	87	$4,540	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	●	●	●	●	●
✓ **LG** Studio WSES4728F	86	$2,700	🔼	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	●	●	●	●	●
✓ **Samsung** NV51K7770SG	84	$2,500	➖	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	●	●	●	Available	●
$ **Ikea** Hjalteby 605.405.43	82	$1,600	🔽	🔽	🔼	⏫	⏫	⏫	●	●	●	●	
✓ **Wolf** E Series Transitional SO3050TE	82	$5,340	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	➖	●	●	●	●	●
✓ **Whirlpool** WOS72EC0HS	81	$2,470	➖	🔽	🔼	🔼	⏫	➖	●	●		Available	●
✓ **GE** Profile PTS9000SNSS	81	$3,000	🔼	➖	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	●	●	●	●	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results				Features + Specs				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Covered element	Convection mode	Temperature probe	Stainless steel	WiFi
30-INCH SINGLE ELECTRIC WALL OVENS *Continued*													
GE JTS5000SNSS	80	$2,000	▲	●	▲	▲	▲▲	●	●	●	●	●	●
LG WSEP4723F	80	$1,980	▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲▲	●	●		●	●
Frigidaire Gallery GCWS3067AF	79	$1,950	▲	▼	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	●	●	●	
KitchenAid KOST100ESS	78	$2,615	●	●	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●			●	
Thermador Masterpiece ME301WS	78	$4,600	●	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	●	●	●	●
Dacor Transitional DOB30P977SS	78	$3,880	▼	▼	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	●	●	Available	●
KitchenAid KOSE900HSS	78	$3,800	●	●	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▼	●	●	●	Available	●
Monogram Minimalist Collection ZTS90DSSNSS	77	$4,150	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	●	●	●
Whirlpool WOS51EC0HS	77	$1,500	●	▼	●	▲▲	▲▲	▲	●			●	●
LG LWS3063ST	76	$1,600	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	●	●		Available	
Electrolux ECWS3011AS	73	$3,300	●	▼	▲▲	●	▲	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sharp SWA3052DS	72	$1,940	–	–	▲	●	▲	●	●	●	●	●	
Viking 5 Series VSOE530SS	72	$6,400	▼	●	▲	▲▲	▲	▼	●	●	●	●	
Miele PureLine Series H 6281 BP	71	$3,500	▲▲	▲	●	●	▲	▲	●	●		●	
Bosch Benchmark HBLP451RUC	71	$3,600	●	▲	▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	●	●	
Monogram Statement ZTSX1FPSNSS	70	$6,000	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	▲▲	●	●	●	●	●
Samsung NV51T5511SS	70	$1,300	●	●	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●			Available	●
Bosch 800 Series HBL8453UC	70	$2,740	●	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	●	●	●	●
Thermador Masterpiece ME301YP	69	$2,900	●	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	●	●	●	●
Frigidaire FCWS3027AS	69	$1,300	▲	▼	▲	●	▲	▲▲	●	●		●	
Dacor Professional HWO130PS	68	$3,500	▼	▼	●	▲▲	▲▲	●	●	●	●	●	
Bosch 500 Series HBL5351UC	67	$2,100	●	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●			●	
Bosch 500 Series HBL5451UC	66	$2,550	●	▲	▲	●	▲	▲	●	●		●	
Whirlpool WOS31ES0JS	65	$1,300	●	▼	●	▲▲	▲▲	▲	●			●	
Ikea Tangby 405.405.44	64	$1,200	–	–	●	▲▲	▲	▲▲	●	●		●	
Viking 3 Series RVSOE330SS	62	$4,330	▼	●	▲▲	●	●	▼	●	●	●	●	
GE JTS3000SNSS	35	$1,300	▲	●	▼▼	▲	▲▲	●	●			●	●

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/ovens.

HOW WE TEST: Similar to ranges, **Overall Score** combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. **Predicted reliability** estimates the likelihood that newly purchased wall ovens from a given brand will develop issues or break within the first five years, and **owner satisfaction** is determined by the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend their wall oven to friends and family members. Cases with insufficient survey data to provide brand-level ratings are indicated by a gray dash (–), and we assume the model has average reliability and satisfaction. **Baking** is a rating of how evenly the oven bakes cakes and cookies on multiple racks. **Broiling** reflects how hot the broiler gets and how evenly it heats. **Oven capacity** reflects usable space. **Self-cleaning** evaluates the oven's ability to clean itself of a lab-calibrated mixture of sticky foods (pie filling, lard, eggs, tapioca).

Microwaves

More people (82 percent) own a microwave oven than any other kitchen appliance, according to a 2023 survey by Statista, a provider of market and consumer data. That's not surprising, given a microwave's versatility. The best microwaves don't just defrost and reheat—they do so evenly. And depending on power level, they can cook a sweet potato in a few minutes, instead of 45 to 50 minutes in the oven; and they can melt chocolate in just seconds. With the capabilities of some newer models—from air-frying to browning to grilling—you might depend on your microwave more than ever.

expert tip "For maximum convenience, opt for a model with a sensor feature. This eliminates guesswork by sensing the moisture emitted from your food, and adjusting the cook time accordingly."

GINNY LUI CR LEAD APPLIANCE TESTER, MICROWAVES

● **HOW TO SHOP:** Countertop microwaves are the biggest part of the market by far, with 59 percent of people currently owning or planning to buy one within the year, according to market research firm Mintel. Only 24 percent own or plan to purchase built-in varieties, which include over-the-range models, Mintel says.

Drawer-style microwave ovens represent a small part of the market.

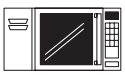
Countertop models come in a wide range of sizes. We categorize those we test as small, midsized, and large—and you'll find the best and worst of them below and on the following pages. (You can view our ratings for over-the-range microwave ovens on our website, at **CR.org**.)

Both countertop and built-in microwaves might offer extra features beyond the typical heat and defrost. Built-ins tend to have more features but usually need to be installed by a pro. Take note of what you routinely make. Simply firing up leftovers? You'll do fine with a high performer from our ratings that skips the bells and whistles (and added cost). But if you tend use your microwave to prepare a variety of dishes, a model that grills or browns will help get dinner on the table faster.

● **WHAT TO AVOID:** Small microwaves—with a capacity of less than 0.9 cubic feet of internal space—tend to be underpowered, so food takes longer to heat up. You're better off squeezing in a midsized model (0.9 to 1.2 cubic feet), which will provide around 1,000 watts of power, as opposed to a mere 700. *—Mary H.J. Farrell*

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features + Specs			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Convection mode	Sensor
SMALL COUNTERTOP MICROWAVES													
Galanz GLCMKA07BER-07	63	$70	–	–	⇈	↑	⇊	⇈	!	0.7	0.4		
Danby DDMW007501G1	62	$115	↑	⇊	↑	↑	↓	↑	!	0.7	0.4		
Commercial Chef CHM770B	61	$90	–	–	⇈	!	⇊	↑	!	0.7	0.4		
Insignia NS-MW07BK0	61	$60	↑	⇊	↑	↑	⇊	⇈	!	0.7	0.4		

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features + Specs			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Convection mode	Sensor
SMALL COUNTERTOP MICROWAVES *Continued*													
Farberware Classic FMO07ABTBKA	55	$85								0.7	0.4		
Sunbeam SGCMV807BK-07	54	$70								0.7	0.3		
Magic Chef HMM770B	52	$60								0.7	0.4		
Midea MMC07S1AWW	52	$65	–	–						0.7	0.4		
Open Kitchen by Williams Sonoma Stainless-Steel Microwave	51	$100	–	–						0.7	0.4		
Oster OGCMV207S2-07	50	$70								0.7	0.3		
Black+Decker EM720CPN-P	48	$80								0.7	0.4		
Kenmore KMCMV807BK07	46	$70								0.7	0.3		
GE JES1072SHSS	45	$110								0.7	0.4		
Ikea Tillreda 404.934.20	41	$60								0.7	0.4		
MIDSIZED COUNTERTOP MICROWAVES													
Panasonic NN-SN67HS	81	$155								1.2	0.7		●
Galanz GSWWD12S1SA10A	73	$150	–	–						1.2	0.7	●	●
GE JES1109RRSS	72	$200								1.0	0.6	●	
Breville Smooth Wave BMO850BSS1BUC1	71	$400								1.2	0.7		●
Galanz GSWWD11S1S10	70	$95	–	–						1.1	0.7		●
PowerXL Microwave Air Fryer Plus	67	$230	–	–						1.0	0.6		
Galanz GSWWD09S1A09A	66	$110	–	–						0.9	0.5	●	
Commercial Chef CHM990B	66	$100	–	–						0.9	0.6		
Samsung MG11H2020CT	65	$210								1.1	0.6		
Hamilton Beach HB61S100027880	64	$75								1.1	0.6		●
Hamilton Beach P90D23AL-WR	64	$70								0.9	0.5		
Commercial Chef CHCM11100W	63	$110	–	–						1.1	0.7		
Hamilton Beach P100N30AP-S3B	63	$70								1.1	0.7		
GE JES1095SMSS	61	$125								0.9	0.5		
Black+Decker EM925AAK-P00A	61	$90								0.9	0.5		
Panasonic HomeChef NN-CD87KS	60	$515								1.2	0.8	●	●
Beautiful by Drew Barrymore BTFCMS811WEST10	59	$150	–	–						1.1	0.7		●
Sharp SMC1132CS	59	$140								1.1	0.7		
Toshiba ML2-EM31PASS	59	$120								1.1	0.6		

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features + Specs			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Convection mode	Sensor
MIDSIZED COUNTERTOP MICROWAVES *Continued*													
Magic Chef HMM1110B	59	$105	⌃	⌄	=	=	=	⌃⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		
Cuisinart EM0P042DG	58	$100	⌃	=	⌄	⌃⌃	=	⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		
Vissani HVM1110B	57	$110	–	–	⌄	⌃	=	⌃⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		
Magic Chef HMM990ST	57	$85	⌃	⌄	=	=	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	0.9	0.5		
Cuisinart EC034AL7-S1	56	$150	⌃	=	⌄	⌃	=	⌃⌃	⌃	1.2	0.7	●	
Toshiba ML2-EM25PABS	56	$120	=	=	=	=	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	0.9	0.5		
Toshiba ML-AC28S	56	$150	=	=	=	⌃	⌄	⌃	=	1.0	0.6	●	
Sharp SMC0912BS	56	$95	=	=	⌄	=	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	0.9	0.5		
GE JES1145SHSS	55	$120	=	=	=	⌄	=	⌃⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		
Insignia NS-MW09SS8	55	$70	⌃	⌄⌄	=	=	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	0.9	0.5		
Farberware FMO11AHTBKB	54	$110	=	⌄	=	⌄	=	⌃⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		
Whirlpool WMC30309LS	53	$160	⌄	⌄	⌃	=	=	⌃	=	0.9	0.6		
Vissani VSCMWE11S2W-10	53	$120	–	–	⌄	=	=	⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		
Proctor Silex PSCMB809BK	53	$80	⌃⌃	⌄⌄	⌄	=	⌄	=	⌃	0.9	0.5		
Black+Decker EM031M2CE	52	$90	⌃	⌄	=	⌄	=	⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		
Breville Compact Wave BMO650SIL1BUC1	50	$240	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌄	⌄	⌄	⌃⌃	=	0.9	0.5		
Breville Combi Wave BMO870BSS1BUC1	49	$490	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌄	=	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	1.1	0.7	●	
Whirlpool WMC30311B	49	$160	⌄	⌄	=	=	=	⌃	=	1.1	0.7		
LG NeoChef LMC0975ST	42	$160	⌃	=	⌄⌄	⌃⌃	=	⌃	⌃	0.9	0.5		
GE Profile PEM31SFSS	33	$480	=	=	⌄⌄	⌃	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	1.1	0.6		●
Kenmore KMCMB809BK09	25	$80	=	=	⌄⌄	=	⌄	=	⌃	0.9	0.5		
LARGE COUNTERTOP MICROWAVES													
✓ **Panasonic** NN-SE785S	87	$375	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	1.6	0.9		●
$ **Panasonic** NN-SN77HS	86	$255	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	1.6	0.9		●
✓ **Panasonic** NN-SD975S	83	$375	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	2.2	1.5		●
$ **LG** MSWN1590L	82	$170	⌃	=	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	1.5	0.9		●
✓ **LG** NeoChef LMC1575ST	80	$210	⌃	=	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	1.5	0.8		●
$ **Hamilton Beach** P11043ALH-WTB	80	$105	⌃⌃	⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	=	⌃	⌃	1.7	0.8		●
✓ **Panasonic** NN-SN97HS	78	$280	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	2.2	1.4		●
✓ **GE** Profile JES2251SJ	77	$300	=	=	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	2.2	1.4		●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features + Specs			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Convection mode	Sensor
LARGE COUNTERTOP MICROWAVES *Continued*													
✓ **LG** NeoChef LMC2075ST	75	$230	▲	●	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	2.0	1.2		●
✓ **Panasonic** NN-SC73LS	74	$240	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	1.6	0.9		●
Sharp SMC2242DS	72	$230	●	●	▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	2.2	1.3		●
Galanz GSWWD14S2S11	70	$130	–	–	▲	●	●	▲	▲	1.4	0.8		●
GE JES2051SNSS	69	$240	●	●	●	●	▲	▲	▲▲	2.0	1.2		●
Vissani EC042A2KJ	67	$180	–	–	▲	●	●	▲▲	▲	1.5	0.8	●	●
Sharp SMC1662DS	67	$180	●	●	●	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	1.6	0.9		●
GE JES1657SMSS	67	$160	●	●	●	●	▲	▲	▲▲	1.6	0.9		●
Hamilton Beach HBCMWG16S2WS11	67	$120	▲▲	▼	●	▲	●	▲	▲	1.6	0.8		●
Sharp SMC2265GS	66	$200	●	●	●	●	▲	▲▲	▲	2.2	1.3		●
Panasonic NN-SD69LS	66	$200	▲	▲	▲	●	●	▲	●	1.3	0.7		●
Panasonic NN-SV79MS	65	$300	▲	▲	●	▲	▲	▲▲	●	1.4	0.7		●
Oster OGZF1301	65	$110	●	▼	▲	▲	●	▲	▲	1.3	0.7		
KitchenAid KMCS3022GSS	64	$550	▼	▼	▲	●	▲	▲▲	▲	2.2	1.3		●
Vissani VSCMWE16S2SW-11	62	$160	–	–	▲	●	●	▲▲	●	1.6	0.9		●
Café CEB515P3NDS	61	$980	▼	●	▲	▲	●	▲▲	●	1.5	0.8	●	●
Whirlpool WMC30516HZ	59	$300	▼	▼	▲	●	●	▲	●	1.6	0.9		●
Panasonic NN-SC668S	59	$150	▲	▲	▼	▲	●	▲▲	▲	1.3	0.7		
Black+Decker EM034AJ2-X	59	$110	▲	▼	▼	▲	●	▲▲	▲	1.3	0.7		
Commercial Chef CHM16100B6C	56	$190	–	–	▲	●	▼	▲	●	1.6	0.8		
Cuisinart EM136ALQ-PVH	53	$100	▲	●	▼	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	1.3	0.7		●
Sharp SMC1452CH	52	$150	●	●	▼	▲	●	▲▲	▲	1.4	0.6		●
Samsung MS14K6000AS	50	$140	●	●	▼	▲	●	▲	▲	1.4	0.9		●
Commercial Chef CHM14110B6C	39	$200	–	–	▼	▼	▼▼	▲	▼	1.4	0.8		

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at **CR.org/microwaves**.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on performance ratings, along with scores for **predicted reliability** (which estimates the likelihood that newly purchased models will develop problems or break within the first five years of ownership, according to our member survey) and **owner satisfaction** (the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend their microwave). Performance scores include **heating evenness,** which reflects how evenly the microwave heats cold mashed potatoes; **defrosting evenness,** which is how well the automatic-defrost program defrosts frozen ground chuck; **speed of heating,** which is the temperature rise of water within 5 minutes; **microwaving noise,** based on how quiet the oven is when microwaving on high. A **sensor** refers to a feature that shuts off the oven automatically when it senses the food is ready.

Air Fryers

Air fryers are essentially convection ovens, which are powered by a heating element and a fan, but they do a quicker job at crisping food because of their small size. Even basic models will deliver pleasingly "fried" results, but standouts also have easy-to-read controls, are super-quiet, and have dishwasher-safe baskets or trays.

● **HOW TO SHOP:** Consider how many people you'll typically feed. One- to three-person households can usually get by with a smaller-capacity fryer of 4 quarts or less. But families of four or more should opt for larger capacities of 5 quarts and up, while also being realistic about countertop space. If you plan to use your air fryer for day-to-day meal prep, look for a model with preprogrammed cook settings and the ability to bake, broil, and reheat. These features can be found in inexpensive models as well as pricier ones. Air fryers that come with a single basket are still the most popular, but you can now also find models that offer trays or two baskets.

● **WHAT TO AVOID:** Steer clear of air fryers that feature large exterior dimensions but have small cooking capacities. Check our ratings for a model's measured capacity. Our testers have often found that the manufacturer's claimed capacity is larger than what the model actually offers. —*Tanya Christian*

expert tip "Think about what you cook most often when choosing between a basket and a tray. While a wider basket is great for preparing brussels sprouts, pizza, or bacon strips, a deeper, albeit narrower, basket is likelier to fit a whole chicken or a head of cauliflower."

LARRY CIUFO CR SENIOR TEST LEADER, APPLIANCES

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features + Specs							
			Controls	Noise	Cleaning	Measured capacity (qt.)	Height (in.)	Width (in.)	Depth (in.)	Weight (lb.)	Digital display	Dishwasher-safe	Preprogrammed settings
AIR FRYERS													
Dash Tasti-Crisp DCAF260	81	$60	▲	▲▲	▲	1.9	11	9	11	6	●	●	
Gourmia GAF686 Digital	80	$55	▲▲	▲	▲	4.3	14	11	14	9	●	●	●
Instant Vortex Plus 140-3079-01	79	$110	▲▲	▲	▲	3.0	11	10	13	9	●	●	●
Chefman Accufry RJ38-SQPF-5T2P-W	79	$100	▲	▲▲	▲	4.5	13	11	14	7	●	●	●
Instant Vortex Plus 140-3089-01	79	$130	▲▲	▲	▲	5.2	13	12	16	14	●	●	●
Cosori Dual Blaze CAF-P583S-KUS Smart	79	$150	▲▲	▲	▲	4.7	14	12	15	14	●	●	●
Cosori Lite CAF-LI211	79	$60	▲	▲▲	▲	1.7	11	9	10	5	●	●	●
Pioneer Woman PW6136170192004	78	$90	▲	▲▲	▲▲	6.7	14	13	16	12	●	●	●
Williams Sonoma Open Kitchen 60068	77	$100	!	▲▲	▲	3.6	13	11	14	11	●	●	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features + Specs							
			Controls	Noise	Cleaning	Measured capacity (qt.)	Height (in.)	Width (in.)	Depth (in.)	Weight (lb.)	Digital display	Dishwasher-safe	Preprogrammed settings
AIR FRYERS *Continued*													
✓ **Cosori** Lite CAF-LI401S Smart	77	$100	⏫	❙	⏫	3.6	13	11	13	10	●	●	●
✓ **Beautiful by Drew Barrymore** 19089	76	$140	^	❙	⏫	9.0	14	17	15	16	●	●	●
✓ **T-Fal** Easy Fry XXL EY705D51	76	$100	^	⏫	^	5.4	13	13	17	13	●		●
✓ **Wolfgang Puck** SWPAF97	76	$110	⏫	^	^	8.2	14	16	13	14			
✓ **Instant** Vortex Slim 140-3100-01	75	$120	^	^	^	4.9	12	11	18	11	●	●	●
✓ **GoWise USA** GW22731	73	$60	⏫	⏫	❙	4.9	14	12	15	12	●	●	●
✓ **Ovente** FAD61302 Digital	73	$85	^	^	^	2.9	13	11	14	11	●	●	●
✓ **Bella** Pro Series 90174	73	$80	^	^	^	3.4	12	10	13	8	●	●	●
✓ **Oster** DiamondForce CKSTAFLC-DM	73	$115	^	^	^	3.6	13	12	15	12	●	●	●
✓ **Sur La Table** SLT-1805	73	$200	❙	⏫	^	8.6	12	16	16	15	●	●	●
✓ **Proctor Silex** 35060	73	$80	⏫	^	^	4.9	14	15	13	10			●
✓ **Dash** Express Tasti-Crisp DCAF120	72	$50	❙	⏫	^	1.9	11	9	11	6		●	
✓ **Dreo** Pro DR-KAF002	72	$90	^	^	^	2.5	12	10	13	8	●	●	●
✓ **Beautiful by Drew Barrymore** 19038	72	$80	^	^	^	4.0	13	12	15	11	●	●	
✓ **Dreo** Pro Max DR-KAF001	71	$120	^	^	^	5.9	14	13	15	13	●	●	●
✓ **Ninja** AF100	71	$80	⏫	❙	^	3.0	13	11	14	10	●	●	●
✓ **Philips** Essential XL HD9270/91	71	$180	^	^	^	3.6	12	13	16	13	●	●	●
Hamilton Beach 35050	70	$60	⏫	^	^	2.6	13	11	14	9	●		●
Elite Gourmet EAF5317D	70	$70	^	^	^	3.8	13	11	13	8	●	●	●
PowerXL Vortex PAF-7QB	70	$140	⏫	^	❙	5.7	14	12	16	12	●		●
GoWise USA GW22826-S	70	$70	^	^	^	3.3	13	11	13	9	●		●
Crux Marshmello 17501	69	$100	^	^	^	7.2	13	13	15	10	●	●	●
Crux Marshmello 17499	69	$60	^	❙	^	3.0	11	9	12	6	●	●	●
Dash Deluxe DFAF455GBAQ01	69	$100	^	^	❙	5.6	14	13	15	12		●	
Ninja Foodi DZ550	68	$250	^	❙	^	7.4	13	17	15	19	●	●	●
Instant Vortex Plus 140-3118-01	68	$180	^	❙	^	6.1	13	16	15	18	●	●	●
Ninja Foodi 2-Basket DZ201	68	$200	^	❙	^	6.0	12	16	14	18	●	●	●
National NA-3001AF	68	$55	❙	^	^	1.7	11	9	11	5		●	

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/airfryers.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on controls, noise, and ease of cleaning. To evaluate an air fryer's **controls,** we consider legibility of markings and the ease of setting desired time and temperature. **Noise** is measured with the appliance in operation on a countertop. Our assessment for **cleaning** includes how easy it is to wash the basket and interior, along with the air fryer's exterior surface.

Toaster Ovens

The humble toaster oven may be the most underappreciated overachiever in the kitchen. It can reheat food, roast vegetables, and much more. But reliably toasting bread to the perfect shade for you is what a good toaster needs to do best; a great one is also easy to use and clean.

● **HOW TO SHOP:** Check out the toaster oven's dimensions and capacity—and make sure it fits on your kitchen countertop. If space permits, consider buying a large-capacity toaster oven (more than 0.5 cubic foot). These ovens generally cost $200 and up, but they'll also provide you the space to roast a chicken or bake cookies in a 9x13-inch baking pan. And that versatility will not only allow you to use your main oven less but also provide an extra place to cook up appetizers or sides when you're entertaining. But if you typically make single portions of food, a smaller model might be a more suitable and cost-effective choice.

● **WHAT TO AVOID:** Most toaster ovens heat to 450° F, with some reaching as high as 500° F. That may seem like a lot, but you'll probably need those high heats if roasted vegetables or broiled burgers are on the menu. Skip models with a claimed maximum temperature under 425° F and you won't regret it.
—Tanya Christian

expert tip "If you're using your toaster oven to give your conventional oven a break, insist on a model with a convection setting. It will cook small- or medium-sized dishes more quickly."

LISA KEON CR SENIOR LAB TECHNICIAN, TOASTER OVENS

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results								Features + Specs			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Reheat	Baking	Color range	Toasting time	Full batch	One slice	Ease of cleaning	Ease of use	Convection oven	Digital display	Large oven	Number of rack positions
TOASTER OVENS																
Breville Smart Oven Air Convection BOV900BSSUSC	74	$400	⏫	⏫	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⏫	⏫	⬆	⏫	●	●	●	8
Breville Smart Oven BOV800XL	70	$270	⏫	⏫	⬆	⬆	⬆	➖	⬆	➖	⬆	⏫	●	●		3
Cuisinart Deluxe Convection TOB-135N	68	$180	⬆	➖	➖	⬆	⬆	⬆	⏫	➖	⬆	⏫	●	●		3
Black+Decker 8-Slice Digital Extra Wide TO3290XSD	67	$100	➖	⬇	⬆	⬆	⏫	⬇	⏫	⏫	⏫	➖	●	●	●	3
Hamilton Beach Professional Digital 31240	67	$170	⬆	⬇	➖	⏫	➖	⬇	⏫	⏫	⬆	⏫	●	●	●	3
Cuisinart TOA60	66	$230	⬆	➖	⏫	➖	⬆	➖	➖	⬆	⬆	⬆	●			2
Breville BOV650XL Oven	66	$190	⏫	⏫	⬇	➖	⏫	⬆	⬆	⏫	⏫	⬆		●		3
KitchenAid KCO255BM Dual Convection	66	$280	⬆	➖	➖	⬆	⏫	⬇	⏫	⏫	⬆	⏫	●	●	●	3
Breville BOV860BSS1BUS1 Smart Oven Air Fryer	65	$350	⏫	⏫	⬆	➖	⬆	➖	➖	⬆	⏫	⏫	●	●		3

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results								Features + Specs			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Reheat	Baking	Color range	Toasting time	Full batch	One slice	Ease of cleaning	Ease of use	Convection oven	Digital display	Large oven	Number of rack positions
TOASTER OVENS *Continued*																
Panasonic FlashXpress NB-G110P Oven	65	$170	⏫	⏫	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	⏫	⏫	➖	🔽		●		1
KitchenAid KCO124BM Digital Countertop Oven With Air Fry	64	$220	🔼	➖	🔼	➖	⏫	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	●	●		2
DeLonghi Livenza Stainless EO 241250M	64	$200	➖	🔽	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔽	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	●	●		4
Cuisinart Convection Steam CSO-300N	63	$290	🔼	➖	➖	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	➖	🔼	⏫	●	●		4
Emeril Power AirFryer 360	63	$170	–	–	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	⏫	⏬	🔼	⏫	●	●	●	6
Cuisinart TOA-65 AirFryer toaster oven	63	$300	🔼	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	●	●		2
Breville Mini Smart Oven With Element IQ BOV450XL	62	$160	⏫	⏫	🔽	➖	⏫	⏫	⏫	➖	⏫	⏫		●		3
Breville Smart Oven Pro BOV845BSS	62	$280	⏫	⏫	➖	🔼	🔼	➖	➖	🔽	🔼	🔼	●	●		3
DeLonghi Livenza Digital Compact Convection Oven 0.5 Cu. Ft. EO 141150M	62	$200	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	●	●		3
Ninja Foodi 10-in-1 XL Pro Air Fry Oven DT201	61	$230	–	–	🔽	➖	⏫	➖	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	●	●	●	4
Hamilton Beach Silver 31143	61	$70	🔼	🔽	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	➖	⏬	🔼	⏫				2
Black+Decker Crisp 'N Bake Air Fry 4-Slice Toaster Oven (TO1785SGC)	61	$80	➖	🔽	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔽	⏫	➖				1
Black+Decker TOD5035SS	61	$145	➖	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	🔽	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	●	●		2
Hamilton Beach Air Fryer Convection 31225	61	$150	🔼	🔽	➖	🔼	🔽	🔼	🔽	⏫	🔼	🔼	●			2
Calphalon Quartz Heat TSCLTRDG1	61	$260	⏫	➖	➖	➖	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	⏫	●	●		2
Cuisinart Chefs Convection TOB-260N1	60	$300	🔼	➖	➖	🔼	⏫	🔽	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	●	●	●	4
Cuisinart Custom Classic Toaster Oven Broiler TOB-40N	59	$100	🔼	➖	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔼	➖				2
Zojirushi ET-ZLC30BA	59	$240	–	–	🔼	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫		●		2
Oster TSSTTVMNDG Oven	58	$130	⏫	➖	➖	🔼	⏬	🔽	🔼	⏫	⏫	➖	●	●	●	2
Calphalon Cool Touch 2106488	58	$340	⏫	➖	➖	➖	🔼	⏬	➖	➖	➖	⏫	●	●		2
Black+Decker Extra Wide Crisp N Bake Air Fry Toaster Oven TO3265XSSD	57	$105	➖	🔽	➖	🔼	🔼	🔽	🔼	⏬	🔼	🔼			●	3
Hamilton Beach Easy Reach 4-Slice 31334 Oven	56	$75	🔼	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	🔼	🔽	⏬	⏫	🔼				2
Cuisinart Toaster Oven Broiler TOB1010	55	$100	🔼	➖	🔼	🔽	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖				2
HOMCOM 7-in-1 Toaster Oven, 21 Qt 4-Slice	55	$120	–	–	🔼	➖	⏫	🔼	➖	⏬	🔼	➖	●			2
Black+Decker 6-Slice Digital Convection CTO6335SS	55	$130	➖	🔽	➖	🔼	⏫	⏬	➖	🔽	⏫	🔼	●	●		4

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at **CR.org/toasters**.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines performance test results with survey data for **predicted reliability** and **owner satisfaction**. Our **reheat** test indicates how well the oven reheats lasagna. **Baking** reflects how evenly a model bakes a batch of muffins and cookies. Our **color range** assessment determines how well an oven produces a range of very light to very dark toast. **Toasting time** reflects how long it takes to toast the maximum number of slices the oven allows. **Full batch** reflects color evenness among all slices in a batch. For the **one slice** test, we toast one slice, aiming for medium-brown. For **ease of cleaning,** we assess (among other things) how easily a model traps food. **Ease of use** reflects how easily the controls can be set and read.

Toasters

If you're particular about your toast, you need a dedicated appliance. Toasters are usually more capable than toaster ovens for heating to an even shade of golden—often in 90 seconds or less.

● **HOW TO SHOP:** Two- or four-slice toasters are sufficient for couples or smaller families. (For larger households whose members don't want to wait for breakfast, you'll need to consider a toaster oven; some can make 14 slices at once.) Prices for CR's recommended toasters range from as little as $25 to as much as $350. A toast-color dial, removable crumb tray, and "cancel" option are standard, and some pricier models offer digital displays, as well as settings for frozen bagels. Keep in mind: A toaster with an array of features isn't necessarily great at its key function—toasting—so check our ratings.

● **WHAT TO AVOID:** A toaster with slots less than 1½ inches wide might not be able to toast a bagel half or a thick slice of bread. —*Tanya Christian*

expert tip "Skip the toasters that offer warranties of only a few months. You can do much better: Most offer at least a year, and some, as many as five."

STACY CANOVA-TURNER CR MARKET ANALYST, TOASTERS

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results						Features + Specs	
			Color range	Full batch	One slice	Ease of use	Ease of cleaning	Toasting time	Controls	Warranty
2-SLICE TOASTERS										
Breville Bit More BTA720XL	92	$90	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	Slide and push button	1 yr.
Toastmaster Two-Slice Toaster	90	$60	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Breville BTA820XL	90	$160	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	Lever and push button	1 yr.
Cuisinart Countdown Metal CPT-415	87	$70	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	❗	⏫	Push button	3 yr.
Revolution InstaGlo R180 2-Slice High Speed Smart Toaster	86	$350	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	❗	⏫	Touchscreen	1 yr.
Breville BTA735BSS1BUS1 the Toast Select Luxe	86	$180	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	❗	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Dualit Studio 2-Slice 26432	86	$100	⏫	⏫	❗	🔼	⏫	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Cuisinart CPT-122	85	$30	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	Dial and push button	3 yr.
Hamilton Beach 2-Slice Modern Chrome 22791	85	$30	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results						Features + Specs	
			Color range	Full batch	One slice	Ease of use	Ease of cleaning	Toasting time	Controls	Warranty
2-SLICE TOASTERS *Continued*										
✓ **Haden** Heritage 2-Slice Wide Slot Toaster	84	$60	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
✓ **Hamilton Beach** 2-Slice 22910 Stainless Steel	84	$40	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏫	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
✓ **Oster** Precision Select 2-Slice	83	$40	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
✓ **Kenmore** 2-Slice Toaster	83	$50	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial, push button, and lever	2 yr.
✓ **KitchenAid** 2-Slice With High Lift Lever KMT2116CU	83	$100	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
✓ **Krups** 2-Slice Stainless Steel KH732D50	83	$60	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
$ **West Bend** 2-Slice in Black & Silver 78823	82	$30	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
✓ **Cuisinart** CPT-620 2-Slice	82	$60	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	3 yr.
✓ **Russell Hobbs** 2 Slice Glass Accent TRL9300GYR	82	$45	⏫	⏫	➖	⏫	🔼	⏫	Push button	2 yr.
✓ **Black+Decker** 2-Slice TR3500SD	81	$40	⏫	🔼	➖	⏫	⏫	⏫	Dial and push button	2 yr.
✓ **Ninja** Compact Toaster Oven – ST101	81	$90	⏫	⏫	➖	⏫	➖	⏫	Digital display, touch-button, and lever	1 yr.
All-Clad 2-Slice TJ802D	80	$150	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Kate Spade 2-Slice Toaster	80	$60	⏫	🔼	➖	🔼	⏫	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Black+Decker TR2900SSD	80	$40	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Oster Black Stainless Steel TSSTTRGM2L	79	$60	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Bella Classics 2-Slice Wide-Slot Toaster BLA14466	79	$30	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Professional Series PS77411	79	$20	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
KitchenAid Pro Line KMT2203CA	79	$300	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	Lever and button	5 yr.
Black+Decker Designer Series TR2200SBD	79	$30	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
All-Clad 2-Slice TJ822D51	78	$100	⏫	⏫	🔼	➖	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Chef'sChoice Gourmezza 2-Slice Toaster	78	$85	⏫	🔼	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	Knob and push button	1 yr.
Cuisinart CPT-720 Digital With memory	78	$90	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	Digital display and push button	3 yr.
Krups Savoy KH311050	78	$50	⏫	🔼	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Amazon Basics 2-Slice KT3680	78	$25	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Cuisinart CPT-5	78	$50	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	⏫	Dial and push button	3 yr.
Berghoff Seren Side Loading Toaster	77	$80	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	➖	➖	Dial, push button	1 yr.
West Bend 2-Slice Retro Toaster	77	$60	⏫	⏫	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Russell Hobbs Retro Style TR9150RDR	77	$80	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Crux CRX 14544 2-Slice	77	$35	⏫	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Uncanny Brands Star Wars Darth Vader Halo Toaster	77	$80	⏫	⏫	➖	🔼	➖	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Cuisinart CPT-320 2-Slice	77	$40	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	Dial and push button	3 yr.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results						Features + Specs	
			Color range	Full batch	One slice	Ease of use	Ease of cleaning	Toasting time	Controls	Warranty
2-SLICE TOASTERS *Continued*										
Brentwood Appliances TS-226S Extra Wide Slot 2-Slice	77	$40	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	Knob and push button	1 yr.
Sencor STS 6057CH Premium Metallic 2-slot	77	$60	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	➖	➖	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Hamilton Beach Professional 22990	77	$50	⏫	⏫	➖	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Amazon Basics 2-Slot TA1729C-W	77	$30	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	Dial and push button	Not stated
Black+Decker 2-Slice Extra Wide Slot T2569B	77	$35	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	➖	⏫	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Dash Clear View DVTS501GY	76	$50	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Sencor 2-Slice Toaster	76	$50	⏫	⏫	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Cuisinart The Bakery CPT-2400	76	$70	⏫	⏫	⏫	➖	➖	🔼	Slide and push button	3 yr.
Toastmaster 2-Slice Wide-Slot TM-22TS	76	$30	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	➖	⏫	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Black+Decker Honeycomb Collection 2-Slice Toaster	76	$50	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	2 yr.
Sunbeam 2-Slice Extra Wide Slots TSSBTR2SBK	75	$16	⏫	⏫	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Oster 2-Slice Stainless Steel TSSTTRWF2S-001	75	$35	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Cuisinart Long Slot CPT-2500	75	$70	⏫	⏫	⏬	🔼	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	3 yr.
Dualit 2 Slice NewGen Toaster	75	$260	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	➖	⏫	Dial	1 yr.
Cuisinart 2-Slice Touchscreen CPT-T20	75	$50	⏫	🔼	⏬	⏫	➖	🔼	Touchpad	3 yr.
Magic Chef MCST2SS	75	$30	⏫	⏫	🔼	➖	➖	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.
Cuisinart CPT-420	75	$80	⏫	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	⏫	Push button	3 yr.
Smeg 2-Slice TSF01	75	$200	⏫	⏫	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	Dial and push button	1 yr.

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/toasters.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score reflects how well a toaster browns slices of toast, how long it takes to toast, and how easy it is to clean. Our **color range** assessment determines how well a toaster produces very light and very dark pieces of toast. **Full batch** reflects color evenness among all slices in a batch. During our **one slice** test, we toast just one slice of large white bread in each model, aiming for medium-brown toast. **Ease of use** reflects how easy the controls are to set and read. **Ease of cleaning** considers how easy it is to clean the exterior and crumb tray. **Toasting time** reflects how long it takes to toast a full batch of bread.

WORSE ⏬ 🔽 ➖ 🔼 ⏫ BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

ROAD REPORT

NEWS & EXPERT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU AHEAD OF THE CURVE™

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Digital Car Keys Get Smarter

A growing number of automakers are allowing drivers to use a smartphone app as a fully functioning car key, including BMW, Ford, Hyundai, Kia, and Tesla. Unlike earlier car key apps that only let you remotely start, cool/warm, or lock/unlock a vehicle, these new ones let you drive without a key fob. Some may even allow you to share a temporary key with another driver through Apple or Google Wallet. But check the fine print: Some smartphone "app keys" work only with certain phones. Of course, these functions depend on the phone being on and charged.

TIP FROM THE TEST TRACK

Stay Safe When Driving With Pillows, Seat Belt Handles, and Other Add-Ons

Need to feel **more comfortable behind the wheel?** It's now easy to find lumbar support pillows, grab handles that make seat belts simpler to put on, and extenders that make the pedals easier to reach. But such **add-ons can interfere** with seat belts and airbags, adding risks in a crash. That's why it's important to **consult an expert** about using them safely. Find one via the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (aded.net).

THE VITAL STATISTIC

37 million

The number of car crashes that could be prevented over a 30-year period if advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) are made standard on new cars. That would prevent 14 million injuries and nearly 250,000 deaths.

Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

RECALL

Ford

Ford is recalling more than 870,000 F-150 pickup trucks from the 2021 through 2023 model years because their electronic parking brakes could activate while the vehicle is in motion, possibly causing drivers to lose control. The problem occurs when the electronic parking brake system's wiring harness chafes against the vehicle's rear axle housing. This impacts only trucks with a single exhaust outlet.

WHAT TO DO: Ford dealerships will replace or repair the vehicle's parking brake wiring harness free of charge. For more information, contact Ford at 866-436-7332.

Dodge Hornet

FIRST DRIVE

BASE PRICE RANGE $30,735-$45,935
DESTINATION CHARGE $1,595
PRICE AS DRIVEN $34,675

The Hornet is Dodge's first all-new model in almost a decade. This small SUV shares most of its body, powertrain, and interior with its Stellantis stablemate, the Alfa Romeo Tonale, and it is likewise built in Italy. It is a touch smaller than the most popular models in its class, like the Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4.

CR'S TAKE: The 268-hp, turbocharged four-cylinder engine gives the Hornet more zip than its rivals. But the unrefined powertrain, stiff ride, dull handling, and elevated noise are disappointing and keep the Hornet from being truly enjoyable to drive. The Hornet shares some shortcomings with the Tonale, such as an awkward driving position and poor-quality interior finishes.

PHOTO: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

ILLUSTRATION BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

Save Big on Your Car Insurance

The best insurers, and how to get your premiums as low as possible.

by Benjamin Preston

LIKE MANY AMERICANS, you've probably watched your car insurance premiums go up hundreds of dollars over the last two years. Even as inflation has cooled, insurance prices have remained high due to more crashes, increased litigation, and higher repair costs. Nationwide, the average premium increase was nearly 18 percent, according to the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. But some states have felt even more pain, with rates up 88 percent in Florida and around 50 percent in Colorado, Nevada, and New York since 2018, according to FINN, a car subscription service company that analyzes market data.

How can you lower your premiums? For starters, switch insurance companies. According to CR's 2022 national survey of 11,509 drivers, consumers who took their business to another company not only saved

money on car insurance but also reported higher satisfaction levels with their new insurer. Even so, 55 percent of drivers stay with the same insurer for six years or longer, missing out on those advantages.

CR recommends shopping for better rates from competing insurers every year or so and, at the same time, reviewing your policy to see how changes in your life may affect your insurance needs. Those changes might include moving to a new town or state, getting a new job, or entering retirement.

"If you haven't given your insurance a hard look in a while, you could be paying too much, not have enough coverage, or both," says Chuck Bell, Consumer Reports' programs director for advocacy.

We'll tell you which life events might cause your insurance needs to change, as well as how you can get the lowest rates possible with the top insurers from CR's 2022 member survey.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SINELAB

9 Ways to Save

Increase your deductible

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

$400 to $500 a year

This timeless insurance advice saves you money because you're increasing your potential out-of-pocket cost for repairs after a crash. Loretta Worters, vice president of media relations for the Insurance Information Institute, says that increasing your deductible from $500 to $1,000 can bring your annual premium down by 20 to 25 percent, on average. "Just make sure you can afford to pay cash for repairs if you need to," Bell says. "The average motorist doesn't file a claim more than about once every couple of decades, so your likelihood of having to shell out for crash damage is actually pretty low."

Drop collision and comprehensive insurance

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

About $1,000 a year

Collision insurance covers you for damage to your car if you're involved in a crash (or if you're the victim of a hit-and-run), and comprehensive covers damage caused by acts of nature–such as storm damage–vandalism, theft, fire, and more. As the years and miles pile up on your car, its value will decrease. Eventually, that lowered value may no longer justify the expense of paying for collision and comprehensive coverage. "As a general rule, when the premium is more than 10 percent of the car's value, it's time to consider dropping collision, and maybe comprehensive, too," Bell says. You may want to keep comprehensive a bit longer because it includes glass coverage, which is always nice to have if a rock hits your windshield and cracks it. But if you're scaling back to liability-only coverage, make sure you have enough to protect yourself from having to pay out of pocket for someone's

HOW MUCH LIABILITY COVERAGE IS ENOUGH?

INSURANCE COMPANIES OFFER several types of coverage to protect you financially when you're involved in a crash. But the most important is liability coverage, which pays for costs related to the injury or death of passengers in another car as well as any damage to other vehicles and property if it's determined that you were at fault in a crash. (Liability coverage also covers passengers in your car.)

Almost every state requires liability coverage. In Virginia, for example, the minimum coverage required by law is $30,000 per person and $60,000 per incident for bodily injury or death of two or more people, and $20,000 for property damage. (This is usually stated on an insurance policy as $30,000/$60,000/$20,000 or simply 30/60/20.) Experts say most state minimum coverage requirements are woefully inadequate. Douglas Heller, an insurance expert, cites as an example a driver covered only by Virginia's minimum requirement who causes a crash in which three people have $50,000 in medical bills per person. The driver's insurer would cover $20,000 of each injured person's medical bills, leaving the driver responsible for any outstanding bills—in this example, $90,000.

How much coverage is enough? Loretta Worters of the Insurance Information Institute recommends a minimum liability coverage of $100,000/$300,000 /$100,000. For more protection, experts recommend purchasing an umbrella insurance policy on top of higher-limit liability coverage. An umbrella policy added to a homeowners policy extends liability protection to $1 million or more, and depending on the insurer, fills whatever gaps may have been left by auto and homeowner policies.

You can usually buy an umbrella policy only from a company that you've already purchased insurance from. Prices vary depending on what types of coverage you already have—car, home, boat, business, etc. You also need to know how high your basic liability insurance needs to be, and if your insurer requires bundling all of your policies to get the umbrella policy. Worters says a $1 million umbrella policy typically adds $250 to $300 to your annual premiums.

There's also coverage that pays for damage caused by uninsured and underinsured motorists, as well as personal injury protection or medical payment coverage, which covers your own injuries if the other driver has inadequate coverage or none at all. Worters says these are always good to have.

property damage and medical expenses if you're found at fault in a crash. (See "How Much Liability Coverage Is Enough?" on the facing page.)

Take a defensive driving course

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

$200 a year

Some insurance companies will allow you to take a safe-driving course to get a discount, although you'll have to take it again every few years to keep the discount active. In New York, for example, where insurance can cost more than $3,000 per year, motorists can receive a 10 percent discount after taking a state-approved defensive driving course. (The course costs about $25, takes 5 hours and 20 minutes to complete, and can be repeated every three years.) Many other states have similar programs, although prices vary widely. In Virginia, where the average cost of insurance is less than $1,500 per year, the course takes 8 hours and can cost as little as $25.

Bundle your auto coverage with your homeowners insurance

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

$300 a year

Douglas Heller, director of insurance with the Consumer Federation of America, says that some companies offer discounts on annual premiums when you purchase both your home and auto policies from them. But he points out that every person's situation is different, and while one person might save money by bundling two types of insurance, another person might save money by buying each policy from a different company. The bottom line: Bundling is worth looking into, but it's not a one-size-fits-all way to save on your premiums.

LIFE EVENTS THAT CAN AFFECT YOUR RATES

Getting married or divorced

Adding a driver to a policy can increase premiums, but if that person has a clean driving record, your rates shouldn't change much. Adding someone with a history of filing claims or with moving violations on their record, on the other hand, can increase your rate, whereas removing that person can result in significant savings.

Changing jobs

You could pay a lower premium if your new commuting distance is shorter or if you're now working from home. You can generally save $100 on premiums if you drive less than 10,000 miles per year.

MORE LIFE EVENTS THAT CAN AFFECT YOUR RATES

Moving to a new area

Insurance rates are highly dependent upon where you live. According to quotes from USAA, a move from suburban Scottsdale, Ariz., to urban Phoenix would raise your annual premiums by about $240. Your premium could drop if you move from a city to a more sparsely populated area. And if you move to an area with a high probability of severe weather events (hurricanes or floods), you're also likely to see your premiums rise.

Adding a teen driver

Drivers between the ages of 16 and 17 are more likely to be involved in a crash than any other group. Adding a teen driver to your insurance policy can increase it a staggering $1,000 to $2,000 a year or more.

If you drive under 10,000 miles, report your annual mileage

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

About $100 a year

"Most insurance companies include annual mileage in their pricing methodology, and lowering your miles can save you money," Heller says. For instance, if you're driving less because of a change in your job location, you may qualify for a lower premium, especially if you're driving less than 10,000 miles in a year. "Some companies offer verified mileage programs where you can get even more savings by reporting your odometer reading on a regular basis."

Pay out of pocket for a one-car fender bender

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

$300 or more
(depending on your driving record)

If you're involved in a crash with another vehicle that results in property damage, many states require that you submit an accident report (and you must report an accident with injuries or death to the police). But for minor damage that doesn't involve another driver–such as scraping your bumper on a support column in a parking garage–paying out of pocket and not filing a claim could prevent a potential rate increase. Keep in mind, though, that what seems like minor damage to a car equipped with safety features such as automatic emergency braking and blind spot warning could be far more expensive to repair than you think. So make sure you get a repair estimate before you decide to shoulder the financial burden on your own.

Get an independent insurance agent

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

Hundreds of dollars

To make comparing coverage and premiums from several insurance companies easier, consult an independent agent. Unlike an agent who represents a single company, an independent agent represents a number of insurance companies, including some that may not be on your radar and could offer the best deal, Heller says. (Insurance brokers are also independent, but he says they're more appropriate for businesses than for individual customers.)

Consider a dividend policy

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

$100 or more

Amica and NJM, top-rated insurers from CR's ratings, are among the companies that allow customers to choose between a traditional insurance policy and a dividend policy. Dividend policies may have higher premiums, but because policyholders own a stake in the company's investments, they can get money back in the form of dividend payments. In the case of Amica, that could be 5 to 20 percent, depending on market fluctuations. "Dividend policies can help reduce the overall cost of coverage, and may help you save even more when both your auto and home are covered by the same mutual insurance company," CR's Bell says.

Sign up for driver monitoring

HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE:

$800

Some insurance companies offer a discount if you allow them to monitor your driving habits with a smartphone app or a device that plugs into your car's diagnostic port. There's a potential for huge savings, but you have to be okay with giving up a certain amount of privacy, allowing your insurer to track your every move in much the same way that you do when using certain smartphone apps. If driver monitoring is available in your state and offered by your insurance company, Bell suggests doing some fact-finding before deciding if it's right for you. Start by asking your insurer what data it will use to calculate a discount, whether any negative driving behavior has the potential to actually increase your rate, and how all the data collected can and will be used. "Ask your insurer if they will sell or share your data with other companies before you agree to one of these programs," he says. "And if you tend to drive more at night because of work or some other reason, make sure you won't get dinged for it."

IF YOU'RE OVER 70, READ THIS

CAR INSURANCE PREMIUMS tend to decrease as you age. But that can change once you reach your 70s, which is when crash rates begin to slowly tick up, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Based on average annual insurance costs from Bankrate, a consumer financial services company, premiums for 70-year-old drivers are about 8 percent higher than for drivers who are 60 years old.

"If you're an older driver who hasn't been in a crash and your rates go up sharply, consider changing insurers," says Chuck Bell, CR's programs director for advocacy. "You can ask your existing company to provide a more competitive quote, but be prepared to vote with your feet if you don't like their answer."

Bell says that some insurers, including Geico and The Hartford, offer preferential rates for older drivers. "Just like drivers in other age groups, aging motorists can save money on insurance by reassessing their needs and switching carriers if they can get a better deal," he says.

Upgrade to a car with advanced safety systems. Cars with active safety equipment like automatic emergency braking (AEB) and strong crash-test ratings are good for everyone, but especially for older drivers. That's because those drivers are more likely than other motorists to suffer from serious injuries if they're in a crash, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says. And according to two IIHS studies, they tend to drive older vehicles that lack lifesaving features such as blind spot monitoring, side or curtain airbags, forward collision warning, or automatic emergency braking.

Take a driver education course. Classes for mature drivers could reduce your risk of an accident or injury and related expenses. Groups like AAA offer programs to help older motorists with declining hearing, eyesight, flexibility, and other issues that can impair driving ability adapt their habits and sharpen their skills. AARP, for example, offers a discount on these courses to members.

Ratings › **We've Got You Covered** Here's how 36 companies selling car insurance performed on seven important attributes, including service quality, the claims process, and annual premiums.

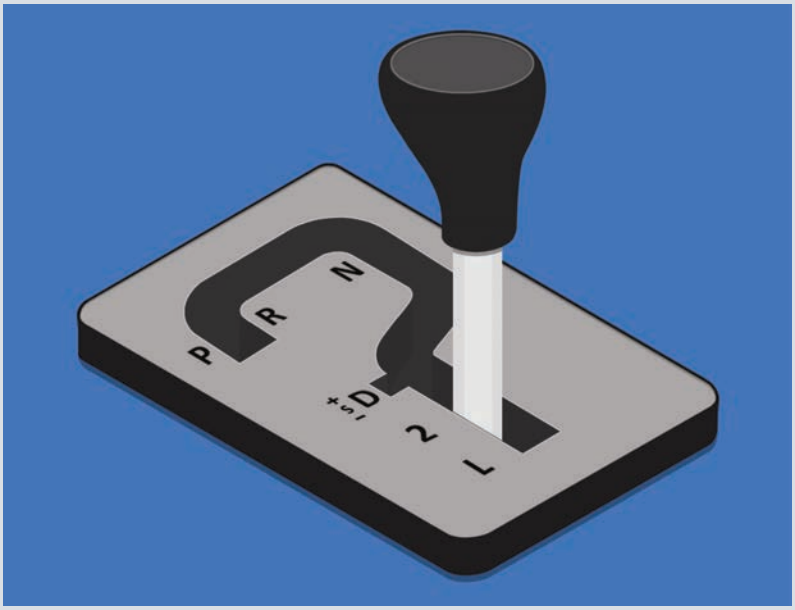
Provider	Reader Survey Results							
	Overall Satisfaction Score	Premiums	Claims	Service	Help & advice	Policy review	Coverage	Policy clarity
CAR INSURANCE								
USAA Group	92	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈
NJM Insurance Group	86	⇈	⇈	⇈	⇈	^	⇈	^
Amica Mutual Group	83	^	⇈	⇈	⇈	^	⇈	^
Erie Insurance Group	81	^	⇈	⇈	⇈	^	⇈	^
PEMCO Mutual Insurance Company	80	^	⇈	⇈	^	^	^	^
Acuity	78	^	⇈	⇈	^	^	^	^
West Bend Mutual Insurance Company	78	^	⇈	^	⇈	^	⇈	^
California Casualty Group	76	^	⇈	^	^	^	^	^
Chubb INA Group	75	I	⇈	^	^	^	⇈	^
The Cincinnati Insurance Companies	69	I	⇈	^	^	I	^	^
Wawanesa General Insurance Company	68	^	^	^	^	I	^	^
Auto-Owners Insurance Group	65	I	^	^	^	I	^	I
Westfield Group	64	I	⇈	^	I	I	^	I
Auto Club Enterprises Insurance Group	64	I	^	^	I	I	^	I
State Farm Group	63	I	^	^	^	I	^	I
Farm Bureau Property & Casualty Insurance Company	63	I	^	^	I	I	^	I
American Family Insurance Group	62	I	^	^	^	I	^	I
Horace Mann Insurance Group	61	I	⇈	I	^	I	^	^
NYCM Insurance Group	61	I	⇈	^	I	I	^	I

Provider	Reader Survey Results							
	Overall Satisfaction Score	Premiums	Claims	Service	Help & advice	Policy review	Coverage	Policy clarity
CAR INSURANCE *Continued*								
Plymouth Rock Companies	59	I	^	^	^	I	^	I
COUNTRY Financial Property Casualty Group	58	I	^	^	^	I	^	I
State Auto Insurance Companies	57	I	^	I	I	I	I	I
Hartford Insurance Group	54	⇊	^	I	I	I	^	I
Auto Club Group	53	⇊	^	I	I	I	^	I
Travelers Group	53	⇊	^	I	I	I	I	I
GEICO (Berkshire Hathaway Insurance Group)	52	⇊	^	I	I	I	^	I
Hanover Insurance Group Property & Casualty Companies	51	⇊	^	I	I	I	^	I
CSAA Insurance Group	51	⇊	^	^	I	I	I	I
Mercury General Group	48	⇊	^	I	I	I	^	I
MAPFRE North America Group	46	⇊	I	I	⇊	⇊	I	⇊
Nationwide Group	46	⇊	^	I	I	⇊	I	I
Farmers Insurance Group	46	⇊	^	I	I	⇊	I	I
Progressive Insurance Group	45	⇊	I	I	I	I	I	I
Allstate Insurance Group	43	⇊⇊	^	I	I	⇊	I	I
Kemper PC Companies	40	⇊⇊	^	⇊	⇊	⇊	I	I
Liberty Mutual Insurance Companies	40	⇊⇊	^	I	⇊	⇊	I	I

HOW WE SURVEY: Ratings are based on responses from 40,251 CR members about their experiences with auto insurance. The **Overall Satisfaction Score** reflects weighted rankings on multiple measures, including prices paid for premiums, claims settlements, customer service not claims-related, help and advice regarding policy choices, breadth of coverage, the thoroughness of information provided during policy review, and the clarity of a policy's contract. The car insurance survey was fielded from July through September 2022.

WORSE ⇊ ⇊ I ^ ⇈ BETTER

Unlock Your Shifter's Secret Powers



MOST PEOPLE GIVE little thought to their car's shifter. According to a recent CR survey, more than 99 percent of CR members report driving newer cars with automatic transmissions, which require you to just pop it into Drive or Reverse to go, set it to Neutral at the car wash, and put it into Park at the end of a trip. But a lot of automatic transmissions have shifters with settings that can make driving more fun, reduce brake wear and tear, and give you an edge in certain driving situations.

"For decades, most new cars have come equipped with transmission features that can help you drive your car more safely, and maybe even give you a little more enjoyment," says John Ibbotson, chief mechanic at CR's Auto Test Center. "Whether you're descending a steep hill, driving through deep snow, or taking off onto the highway from an on-ramp, there are ways to make your transmission do more for you."

Below, CR's experts tells you how your car's shifter can help you use your transmission to its fullest potential.

L

WHAT IT DOES: L, or Low, keeps an automatic transmission in a low gear, which provides maximum engine power at a very slow speed. (These are similar to the low gears on a bicycle that allow you to pedal up a steep hill.)
WHEN TO USE IT: "Shift into L when you need a lot of power to, say, pull a boat out of the water, or when you want more control and not much speed, such as when you're navigating down a steep part of an unpaved or slippery road or trail," says Ibbotson. "Shifting into L allows the engine to assist the brakes when you're trying to maintain a low, controlled speed on a descent."

2

WHAT IT DOES: Depending on the model, selecting 2 keeps the transmission from shifting past second gear, which will give your tires more turning power than in Drive, but less than in Low. Selecting 2 will also allow you to drive at higher speeds than when in Low.
WHEN TO USE IT: "Select 2 when you're stuck in a snow bank or trying to make your way out of deep sand or mud," Ibbotson says. "That will help keep the wheels from spinning as fast as they would in Drive, and may give you the traction you need in those scenarios. You can also use it to maintain a slow speed with less braking when driving down long, steep declines."

MANUAL OR S

WHAT IT DOES: Switching to manual or S mode (usually by pushing a button, sliding the shifter handle sideways, or clicking the paddle shifters behind the steering wheel) allows you to override the automatic transmission and manually select gears.
WHEN TO USE IT: Manual mode allows you to tap into power that lurks within the car and to delay shifts for a sportier driving experience. "It can make driving an automatic more fun," Ibbotson says. "It's also a handy way to slow the car without braking and potentially overheating the brakes if you're on a roadway with steep downhill grades."

B

WHAT IT DOES: B stands for "braking" and is found in many EVs and hybrids, and in some models with a continuously variable transmission (CVT). It uses regenerative braking or the drivetrain (or, on some hybrid models, both) to slow the car. "The best-known car with this feature is the Toyota Prius," Ibbotson says.
WHEN TO USE IT: "It's a good way to avoid wear on the brakes when driving down a long decline, or the road is slippery, because the car will slow down as soon as you lift your foot off the accelerator, which can be smoother than stepping on the brakes and causing the wheels to lock and the car to slide," Ibbotson says.

ILLUSTRATION BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

SMALL HATCHBACKS

Chevrolet Trax

Feature-Packed but Short on Comfort

58
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 64

HIGHS Responsive acceleration, good fuel economy, roomy interior for its size, nice features for the price

LOWS Noisy cabin, low-end interior, no all-wheel-drive option

POWERTRAIN 137-hp, 1.2-liter turbocharged 3-cylinder engine; 6-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL 31 mpg on regular

PRICE $20,400-$23,900 base price + $1,095 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $24,680

THE REDESIGNED TRAX is a slam dunk when it comes to value: heated front seats, a heated steering wheel, wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, and a wireless charger, all for under $25,000 as tested. But an uneven power delivery, pronounced cabin noise, and barely tolerable front seats resulted in a mediocre road-test score.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

The Trax's turbocharged three-cylinder feels energetic for such a small engine, with a surprisingly healthy amount of midrange power. It makes the most of its modest 137 hp, and the 9.5 seconds it takes to scoot from 0 to 60 mph is about average for the class. But we dislike the hesitation when stepping back on the gas pedal during rolling stops, made worse by an uneven burst of power that follows. The six-speed automatic is often hesitant to downshift, keeping the engine in too tall a gear, where it sounds a bit rough.

Ride comfort is pretty decent. Yes, there's a firmness to the suspension, but it isolates most bumps well and minimizes side-to-side jostling of occupants. Vague, overly light steering contributes to a mundane feel through corners, although it managed an impressive 55-mph avoidance-maneuver speed.

CABIN COMFORT

Neon-yellow trim around the air vents seems to be Chevy's attempt to spruce up what is an otherwise drab and cheap-feeling interior full of dull, hard plastics. But we appreciate that heated front seats and a heated-and-leather-wrapped steering wheel are bundled into a reasonably priced option package.

The driver has plenty of headroom, good sight lines out over the hood, and a clear view of the gauges. But the plastic center console intrudes on the driver's right knee space, and the door armrest is unpadded.

Most of our drivers found little to like about the front seat: The padding is hard, the bottom cushion is short on thigh support, and discomfort quickly sets in. The rear seat is fairly comfortable and spacious for the class. It has good foot room under the front seats and decent thigh support, though taller passengers might find headroom limited.

CONTROLS AND USABILITY

The controls are mostly straightforward. The infotainment touchscreen is simple, and the climate system's knobs and buttons are easy to use. However, the audio buttons behind the steering wheel take some acclimation.

SAFETY

AEB with pedestrian detection comes standard, with BSW and RCTW optional; AEB highway isn't available.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURERS

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

LUXURY ELECTRIC SUVs

Lexus RZ

Drives Well but Range and Charging Disappoint

77
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 81

HIGHS Comfortable ride, quiet cabin, quick acceleration

LOWS Shorter driving range and slower charging than other EVs, unintuitive controls, long wet-stopping distances, no glove box

POWERTRAIN 308-hp, dual electric motors; 1-speed direct-drive; all-wheel drive

RANGE 220 miles

PRICE $58,500-$64,000 base price + $1,150 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $63,405

THE RZ IS the first all-electric vehicle from Toyota's upscale brand. It's a fine-driving SUV, with vigorous acceleration, a comfortable ride, and a quiet cabin. But it falters when it comes to driving range, charging speed, and the amount of EV-specific information within the car.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

With 308 hp, the RZ has ample giddyup. Need to get around a car in a passing zone? Just floor the accelerator pedal and you'll zip right around them.

The RZ's suspension does a good job absorbing most bumps thrown its way, keeping the SUV settled and the ride comfortable. It feels competent during normal driving, but the softly tuned suspension results in considerable body roll through turns when you pick up the pace, lacking the sharpness of the Genesis GV60, for example.

We appreciate that the RZ's brakes feel almost normal, without the low-speed grabbiness that plagues many EVs. While the regenerative braking levels can be changed on the fly with paddles located behind the steering wheel, the RZ lacks one-pedal driving.

RANGE AND CHARGING

The RZ 450e Premium we tested, with 18-inch wheels, has an EPA-rated 220-mile range—short by today's standards. But the Luxury trim with 20-inch wheels sees the driving range reduced to just 196 miles, which is downright pathetic.

A puny 6.6-kW onboard charger makes for slow at-home charging. Most EVs are able to charge at around 10 to 11 kW. It has a competitive 150-kW max acceptance rate at DC fast-charging locations, but real-world results may vary. We gained just 40 miles of range during a 20-minute stop, seeing a peak power of only 48 kW; other EVs typically gain well over 100 miles.

CABIN COMFORT

The front seats have comfy cushions with a well-bolstered seatback to hold you in place through turns. Some testers found the seatback lumpy, and having just two-way lumbar adjustment falls short of luxury car standards. The low rear seat provides little thigh support, and foot space is tight underneath the front seats.

CONTROLS AND USABILITY

The 14-inch touchscreen consolidates media and climate controls into a single display (typically not a great thing in our book), but at least the climate functions are always visible. The unlabeled steering wheel controls, as part of the optional windshield head-up display, make for an unnecessary guessing game.

SAFETY

AEB with pedestrian detection, AEB highway, BSW, and RCTW all come standard.

ELECTRIC CARS

Hyundai Ioniq 6

A Sleek and Capable EV Gem

81
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 89

HIGHS Zippy acceleration, responsive handling, quiet cabin, quick DC public charging

LOWS Awkward location of window and mirror controls, small trunk

POWERTRAIN 320-hp, dual electric motors; 1-speed direct-drive; all-wheel drive

RANGE 270 miles

PRICE $41,600-$56,100 base price + $1,115 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $52,975

THE ALL-NEW IONIQ 6 takes the core mechanical elements of the Ioniq 5 and wraps them up in a more aerodynamic sedan. Quick acceleration and responsive handling make the Ioniq 6 fun to drive, while a competitive range and a relatively quick at-home charging rate make it easy to live with. Its biggest negatives include some quirky controls and an awkwardly small trunk.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

Acceleration is smooth and effortless. It sprints from 0 to 60 mph in just 4.6 seconds if you floor it, making it quicker than the Tesla Model 3. A low-mounted battery pack and prompt steering contribute to a balanced, playful feel when you drive in a hurry on a twisty back road. The taut suspension soaks up bumps well, barring the occasional harsh impact transmitted by the large 20-inch tires.

The feel of the brake pedal is firm and consistent—among the best of any EV we've tested—and we love how the steering wheel paddles make it easy to adjust the intensity of the car's regenerative braking system.

RANGE AND CHARGING

Our tested Ioniq 6 SEL with the Long Range battery has an EPA-rated driving range of 270 miles, which is competitive with similarly sized and priced EV sedans. The car's 10.9-kW onboard charger makes for quicker at-home replenishment than most EVs when using a 240-volt home charger installed on a 50-amp circuit. Expect to gain about 35 miles of range per hour, which is relatively speedy.

On trips, the Ioniq 6's 235-kW maximum acceptance rate allows for DC fast charging at public stations that's on the quicker side; we were able to gain 180 miles of range during a 30-minute stop at an Electrify America station.

CABIN COMFORT

The front seats are comfy and supportive with well-placed armrests, and we appreciate that the center console doesn't intrude on knee room. The rear seat has plenty of legroom, but headroom is tight and there's minimal foot space underneath the front seats.

CONTROLS AND USABILITY

Most controls, including the infotainment touchscreen, are easy to use. But several drivers found that they had to tilt the steering wheel up to an awkwardly high position to view the entire instrument panel. It's also baffling why the window controls are on the center console, rather than on the door. And the Ioniq 6 doesn't have wireless Android Auto or Apple CarPlay—an odd omission for a high-tech car.

SAFETY

AEB with pedestrian and cyclist detection, AEB highway, BSW, and RCTW are standard.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURERS

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

Ratings **Different Strokes** Hyundai's Ioniq 6 EV is easy to like, while the comfortable Lexus RZ's meager range is disappointing. The Chevrolet Trax delivers loads of features for the price.

Make + Model	Overall Score	Survey Results		Road-Test Results												Active Safety Features		
		Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Range, miles	Seat comfort, front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft.	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW/RCTW
HATCHBACKS/WAGONS UNDER $30,000																		
✓ **Kia Niro** 1.6H	79			83	45	500	/						55.0	8.9	133	S	S	S
✓ **Kia Soul** 2.0L	68			77	28	395	/						55.0	8.8	120	S	S	O
✓ **Toyota Corolla Hatchback** 2.0L	68			70	36	470	/						53.5	8.7	129	S	S	O
✓ **Nissan Kicks** 1.6L	61			67	32	340	/						51.5	10.5	137	S	S	S
Chevrolet Trax 1.2T	58			64	31	430	/						55.0	9.5	131	S	–	O
Hyundai Venue 1.6L	57			64	32	380	/						55.5	8.9	125	S	O	O
Mitsubishi Mirage 1.2L	35			35	37	345	/						52.5	12.1	138	S	–	–
ELECTRIC CARS $45,000-$65,000																		
✓ **BMW i4**	84			94	96 ◫	271	/						55.5	3.5	129	S	O	S
✓ **Hyundai Ioniq 6**	81			89	103 ◫	270	/						55.5	4.6	130	S	S	S
✓ **Tesla Model 3**	78			82	131 ◫	358	/						55.0	5.3	133	S	S	–
Polestar 2	53			72	100 ◫	260	/						55.5	4.4	123	S	S	O
ELECTRIC SUVs $45,000-$65,000																		
✓ **Kia EV6**	91			90	109 ◫	282	/						54.5	4.7	126	S	S	S
✓ **Genesis GV60**	84			91	95 ◫	248	/						54.5	5.1	131	S	S	S
✓ **Lexus RZ**	77			81	107 ◫	220	/						51.0	4.9	138	S	S	S
✓ **Hyundai Ioniq 5**	76			91	98 ◫	256	/						53.0	4.7	131	S	S	S
✓ **Subaru Solterra**	75			77	102 ◫	222	/						53.0	6.4	135	S	S	S
✓ **Toyota bZ4X**	75			77	102 ◫	222	/						53.0	6.4	135	S	S	S
Tesla Model Y	73			90	122 ◫	330	/						54.5	4.7	121	S	S	–
Audi Q4 E-Tron	67			86	93 ◫	236	/						52.5	5.9	133	S	S	S
Ford Mustang Mach-E	66			78	91 ◫	277	/						52.0	5.3	136	S	S	S
Volkswagen ID.4	65			83	99 ◫	255	/						52.5	5.8	134	S	S	S

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/cars. When you're ready to buy, configure the vehicle and find the best price in your area by clicking the green "View Pricing Information" button on the model's dedicated page.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines **road-test results,** survey data for **predicted reliability** and **owner satisfaction,** and **advanced safety,** which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as automatic emergency braking, pedestrian detection, blind spot warning, and rear cross traffic warning. A dash (–) means no such safety system is offered; O means that it's optional on at least some trim levels; S means that the feature is standard on all trims. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes to prevent the vehicle from rolling away.

WORSE – BETTER | ✓ CR RECOMMENDED | CR GREEN CHOICE

◫ Miles-per-gallon equivalent (MPGe).

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Our advice: Skip these festive fails.

If You Thought Seasonal Depression Was Bad ...
This problem doesn't sound much better.
Submitted by Mike Beirl, Bolingbrook, IL

There Goes the Gift Budget
Unless this bag comes stuffed with cash, we say find another gift wrap.
Submitted by Carmy H., Dillsburg, PA

Which Meat Is It, Mate?
Maybe "turkey" means something different down under.
Submitted by Sylvia Stanat, via email

Can Cute Kids Wear These Sweaters, Too?
But perhaps they don't look good on anyone ...
Submitted by Tim Walker, Mansfield, NJ

SHARE

Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email at **SellingIt@cro.consumer.org** or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as your name and location.

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